



GOD'S WORD ON GIVING

Just what does the Bible tell us about financial giving? It suggests it should be:

- **Supernatural:** All we have comes from God [Ps 24:1: *'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it'*]. We give to his work because all we have is only on loan. More than that, we love him, want to thank him - and make sure others taste his goodness. But naturally, we humans are not very good at being grateful! So it gets even better: God actually helps us to give, changing our hearts with what Paul calls it the "grace of giving" [2 Cor 8:9]. Even the motivation and power to give comes from him!
- **Sacrificial:** Paul's friends in Macedonia "gave as much as they were able, even beyond their ability" [2 Cor 8:3]. God's love for us isn't calculating or limited; the cross was costly and painful. We too should feel the cost of our giving: it's joyful, loving sacrifice for God and others. When that happens, it doesn't matter how much [or little] we give compared with others - or even if we can't afford a particular increase - it's what it shows of our love. That's why Jesus was once so impressed with a poor widow, who didn't give much compared with others, but he said her gift was far more generous. Because for her, it was sacrificial [Luke 21:1-4].
- **Systematic:** "Each one should give what they have decided" [2 Cor 9:7] "Each one should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income" [1 Cor 16:2]. So we make time to plan what and how we will give, avoiding the "what's in my

wallet today?” syndrome. Many Christians follow the Old Testament pattern of giving 10% of their net income to God’s work, particularly our local church. We’d recommend that percentage as a great place to *start* if you’ve not done so before (not that it’s the place to finish! Some, maybe many, can – and should – give more than that).

- **Strategic:** The example of Jesus and the early church suggest that after providing for ourselves and our family, our main priority in using our money should be God’s kingdom, and in particular:
 1. funding those engaged in the church’s public teaching & evangelism [1 Cor 9:3-14; Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 5:17-18];
 2. supporting the vulnerable, firstly in the church and then in our community [2 Cor 8:1-7; Gal 6:9-10];and these not just locally, but in the wider church.
- **Symbolic:** There is nothing more exciting and enriching in life than to give ourselves, all that we are and have, to God and his glory. The giving of our money is a tangible sign that we want to do that: “They gave themselves first to the Lord” [2 Cor 8:5]. It’s a powerful witness to the outside world of how much we treasure Christ, and how wonderful he is!

