

The Apostle Paul says, “God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

But for many Christians they struggle to give and perhaps one reason is because we don't fully understand what it means to give of ourselves to God.

Giving is not about us but it is rather about God.

It is a matter of the heart and who we understand God to be. When we see God as our loving, heavenly Father, who wants us to delight in him our mind shifts from worldly focus to those things of eternity—his kingdom.

We delight to do his will as the Psalmist says, “*I delight to do your will, O my God...*” (Psalm 40:8). Thus, God has given us a part of in his work and in his will.

Giving is a matter of the heart and where our heart lays.

As David also said, “*For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*” (Psalm 51:16-17).

So, if it is a matter of the heart what are we to do when it comes to giving offerings to the Lord?

There are a few reminders in Scripture of what we are to do and think about when it comes to giving back to the Lord.

First, giving is not optional. Jesus said to his disciples, “*When you give...*” (Matthew 6:2), he was not saying, “if you give,” but rather “when you give.” The first thing we see is that all Christians are to give back to the Lord, whether that is our time, energy or money. And specifically, here in Matthew, Jesus was referring to actual money.

Second, we don't give to be recognised by others. Jesus said, “*Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them.*” (Matthew 6:1). We must give for the glory of God not for men. We don't give so that our approval ratings go up in church but rather we give because our heavenly Father knows our heart. We give for his glory and honour—not our own.

Third, we recognise that our giving is to please God and no-one else. “*When you give...your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*” (Matthew 6:3-4) When we give, we are not simply adding to the church budget; we are giving a thank offering to the Father himself. Thus we give “*as unto the Lord*” (Colossians 3:23).

Fourth, our giving is an act of worship unto the Lord. “*On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save*” (1 Corinthians 16:2). Paul was telling the church that they should set aside money to give back to the Lord as an act of worship. God does not ask us for our leftovers. He did not tell the Israelites to select a

lamb that was sick and dying or that they didn't want and to offer it up as a sacrifice but rather he asked for a spotless lamb that was without blemish. Although, many times it is easier for us to say to God, if I have enough than I will give, God wants us to give first, and let him provide for our needs. Giving is part of our worship to God in saying that we value him more than anything else.

Lastly, many Christians are not sure how much they should give. Some believe it is 10% because that is what was required in the Old Testament. Consider what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8:9, *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."* Christ's self-giving and self-sacrifice is now the standard by which we give. Our giving should be inspired and instructed by Christ's inexpressible gift.