

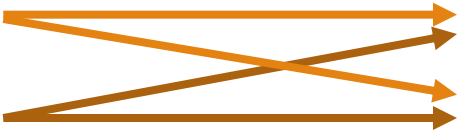

Giving & Generosity

CGC ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

THINK BIBLICALLY - CLASS 6

FEBRUARY 11, 2018

Giving & Generosity

- A Biblical framework
 - The generosity of God
 - Giving & generosity
 - in the OT  towards God
 - in the NT  towards others
 - Why give generously?

The Generosity of God

Giving & generosity are rooted in the nature & character of God

- God is love (1 John 4:8)
 - “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
 - “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:9)

The Generosity of God

Giving & generosity are rooted in the nature & character of God

- God is generous – the giver of life & all else
 - “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” (Job 33:4)
 - “These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.” (Psalm 104:27-28)

The Generosity of God

Giving & generosity are rooted in the nature & character of God

- God is generous – the giver of life & all else
 - “For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.” (1 Chronicles 29:14)
 - “For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matt. 5:45)
 - “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)

Giving & generosity in the OT

Giving to God

- Both required and 'free-will' giving in the OT
- Required giving
 - To acknowledge & honor God as Lord, and the Giver of all things
 - To support the priests / Levites / Temple worship
- Free-will giving (i.e. not required)
 - An expression of love and thankfulness to God

Giving & generosity in the OT

Required giving to God

- Required sacrifices (e.g. Leviticus 1-7)
 - Various purposes (e.g. atoning for sin & guilt, etc.)
 - To support the priests / Levites
- Required offerings at special Feasts (Exod. 23:14-17)
 - “None shall appear before me empty-handed.” (Exod. 23:15)
 - “The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.” (Exod. 23:19; 34:26)
 - Honoring God with the first and the best – not the ‘left-overs’

Giving & generosity in the OT

Required giving to God

- Tithing
 - Required giving of a percentage (e.g. 10%) to the Lord
 - “And every tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the LORD.” (Lev. 27:32)
 - “You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year.” (Deut. 14:22)
 - Practice predates the giving of the Law
 - Abraham to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20; Heb. 7:4-6)
 - Jacob’s vow to God (Gen. 28:20-22)

Giving & generosity in the OT

Required giving to God

- Tithing
 - Support for priests / Levites / worship
- Differing views on exact percentage required
 - Ranges from 10% to 23.3% (average) per year
 - [1 annual tithe] vs. [1-2 annual tithes + tithe every 3 years]
- For further study: Lev. 27:30-34; Num. 18:21-31; Deut. 12:1-14; Deut. 14:22-29; Deut. 26:12-15)

Giving & generosity in the OT

Required giving to God

- Not giving had consequences
 - 20% penalty added for unintentional failures (e.g. forgetting) to fulfill obligations (Lev. 5:14-16)
 - God's curse, for robbing Him of His due (Malachi 3:8-12)

Giving & generosity in the OT

Required giving to God

“Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 3:8-12)

Giving & generosity in the OT

Free-will giving to God

- Fellowship/Peace offerings (e.g. Leviticus 7:11-21)
 - Expression of thanksgiving to God (Lev. 7:12)
- Other special offering & gifts
 - e.g. construction of Tabernacle (Exod. 25:1-7; 35:4-36:7) – “From every man whose heart moves him...”
 - e.g. construction of Temple (1 Chron. 29:1-9)
 - David himself contributed >100 tons of gold (~\$6 billion today)
 - e.g. thanksgiving for safety in war (Num. 31:48-54)

Giving & generosity in the OT

In both required and free-will giving to God, attitude is important

- Honoring God with the first & best, rather than with the 'left-overs'
- e.g. Firstfruits, Exod. 23:19; 34:26
- e.g. David: "I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing." (2 Sam. 24:24)
- Cost as an indicator of how much you value / honor someone
- Generous givers upheld as positive examples

Giving & generosity in the OT

“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’ By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’ By saying that the LORD's table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 1:6-9)

Giving & generosity in the OT

“Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.” (Malachi 1:10-14)

Giving & generosity in the OT

Required giving to others

- Tithe every 3rd year for the needy
 - “At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.” (Deut. 14:28-29)
- Sabbath year, every 7th year
 - ““For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat.” (Exod. 23:10-11)

Giving & generosity in the OT

Required / free-will giving to others

- Leaving crops for others to glean
 - “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.” (Lev. 19:9-10)
 - Commanded/required of land-owners
 - But the amount is not specified – left to each person’s generosity (or lack thereof)

Giving & generosity in the OT

Required / free-will giving to others

- Multiple commands about
 - Not oppressing or taking advantage of the poor
 - e.g. Exod. 22:21-27; 23:6; Lev. 25:35-46;
 - Generosity towards the poor, including lending without interest
 - e.g. Exod. 22:25 - “If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him.”

Giving & generosity in the OT

Required / free-will giving to others

“If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit.” (Lev. 25:35-37)

“If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.” (Deut. 15:7-8)

Giving & generosity in the OT

Many encouragements to generosity in the OT

- “The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives” (Psalm 37:21)
- “It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice... He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor...” (Psalm 112:5,9)
- “Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.” (Prov. 14:31)
- “Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his deed.” (Prov. 19:17)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving to God & others

- In the NT, the emphasis is more on willingness & generosity in giving (free-will giving), than on necessity of (i.e. required) giving
- e.g. 2 Cor. 9:6-7 - “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Giving & generosity in the NT

Tithing

- Mentioned only in passing in the NT
 - Never explicitly commanded to Christians / the Church in the NT
- Not required of Christians in the NT
 - Required under the Mosaic Law (together with other forms of required giving in the OT), as part of Israel as a theocratic nation
 - “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.” (Luke 11:42)
 - Followers of Christ are no longer under the Law

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving in the NT

- Tithing – No longer required, but...
- As Scripture, OT teaching still shapes our understanding of giving
 - e.g. 10% as a guideline (or baseline?)
- Principles underlying required giving in the OT are still active in the NT, for example...
 - Acknowledging & honoring God through giving
 - Giving Him the best, not the leftovers
 - The need to financially support those doing the Lord's work
 - Giving to / sharing with the poor

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving in the NT – Some overarching principles

1. Generosity (e.g. 2 Corinthians 8-9)

- Flows out of the grace we have received in Christ
- A reflection of Christ (and His generosity) in us
- “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 by his poverty might become rich.” (2 Cor. 8:9)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving in the NT – Some overarching principles

1. Generosity (e.g. 2 Corinthians 8-9)

- “And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.” (2 Cor. 8:1-3, NIV 1984)
- Self-sacrificial generosity that is not limited by poverty

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving in the NT – Some overarching principles

2. Proportionality

- In accordance with how the Lord has prospered us

“So the disciples determined, ***every one according to his ability***, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.” (Acts 11:29)

“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, ***as he may prosper***” (1 Cor. 16:2)

“For they gave ***according to their means***, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord” (2 Cor. 8:3)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving in the NT – Some overarching principles

2. Proportionality

- In accordance with how the Lord has prospered us

“For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable ***according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have***. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, ‘Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.’” (2 Cor. 8:12-15)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving in the NT – Some overarching principles

3. Intentionality

- Not to be done randomly/haphazardly, but planned, with deliberate intent

“Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.” (1 Cor. 16:1-2)

“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Cor. 9:7)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving in the NT – Some overarching principles

4. Responsibility

- Handling finances as stewardship
- Entrusted with using money in accordance with God's purposes, and as directed by Him
 - Giving to His work & to others is part of faithful stewardship
- See previous classes for more on this

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving in the NT – Some overarching principles

4. Responsibility

- Giving to God/others does not release us from our other God-given responsibilities

“He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God.” (Matt. 15:3-6)

“But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Tim. 5:8)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving in the NT – Some overarching principles

4. Responsibility

- Not supporting those who are able to support themselves but are unwilling to work

“For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.” (2 Thess. 3:10)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving to God

- Free-will giving that is an expression of our love for Him, and our desire to honor /give thanks to Him
- “Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.” (John 12:3)
- Cost: 300 denarii (1 year’s wages)
- **For reflection:** What do our offerings to God say about what we think about / how we value Him?
- cf. Malachi 1:6-14

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving to God

- Provides the needed financial support of those who labor in the ministry of the Gospel
- “Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.” (1 Cor. 9:13-14)
- The implication being that we need to give!

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving to God

- Provides the needed financial support of those who labor in the ministry of the Gospel
- “And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.” (Phil. 4:15-17)
- Partnership in the Gospel through financial support

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving to others

- Doing good to all, but with priority on fellow believers in Christ
- “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:10)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving to others

- Many examples of believers sharing to provide for one another's needs
- “And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.” (Acts 2:45)
- “Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common... There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.” (Acts 4:32,34-35)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving to others

- Many examples of believers sharing to provide for one another's needs
- “And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. ***Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.***” (2 Cor. 8:1-4, NIV 1984)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving to others

- Responsibility of those who are rich, to be generous and willing to share with the needy
- “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:17-18)

Giving & generosity in the NT

Giving to others

- But Christ also calls on *all* His followers to give to the needy
- “And he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.... Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy.” (Luke 12:22-23, 32-33a)
- **For reflection:** Does worry that we won't have enough for ourselves keep us from sharing with others in need?

Why Give Generously?

- To honor God and bring Him glory
 - Generosity reflects his nature & character
 - What does lack of generosity say about our spiritual state?
 - Faithful stewardship of all He's blessed us with
 - Honoring Him as our great King
 - Those who are helped give Him thanks & glorify Him
 - “For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others” (2 Cor. 9:12-13)

Why Give Generously?

- To help those in need
 - Doing to others as you would have them do to you
- To build fellowship in the Body of Christ
 - e.g. the early Church in Acts 2 & 4

Why Give Generously?

- God's blessings on the generous
 - "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully... And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God." (2 Cor. 9:6,8-11)
 - "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his deed." (Prov. 19:17)

Why Give Generously?

- God's blessings on the generous
 - "Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12:33-34)
 - "They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life." (1 Tim. 6:18-19)

Why Give Generously?

- A final word of warning...
 - “And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:15-21)