

“Giving, Missions, and the Mission of the Local Church”

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Financial giving is a part of Christian ministry, Christian stewardship, and Christian responsibility.

In the book of Exodus the children of Israel are being called upon to build the Tabernacle. Chapter 35 gives us the story of how the money was collected so that the ministry could move forward. Throughout the narrative, stress is placed on “a heart that is willing.”

Notice the following occurrences of this idea.

“And they came, every one whose *heart stirred him up*, and *every one whom his spirit made willing*, and they brought the LORD'S offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments” (Exod. 35:21).

“The children of Israel *brought a willing offering* unto the LORD, every man and woman, *whose heart made them willing* to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses” (Exod. 35:29).

“Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a *willing heart*, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass” (Exod. 35:5).

“And they came, both men and women, *as many as were willing hearted*, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the LORD” (Exod. 35:22).

The word “willing” simply means voluntary. There were no “brownie” points to be earned; future returns on their spiritual investments were not promoted or touted. They gave simply because they wanted to. Israel, as a theocracy, had to pay their taxes (i.e. tithe), but this offering was different. This offering was a voluntary offering in order to build the Tabernacle. This was above and beyond anything the “state” demanded (i.e. State/Federal withholdings).

Every believer should give a portion of their regular income to the local church they regularly attend. I am not interested in those outside of our fellowship giving to this ministry. They should be attending a local fellowship and their gifting should be used to support the Lord's work in and through that fellowship. However, those who are a part of the church family should give regularly to the ministry needs of the local church.

Why do I say this? **First**, all Christians are recipients of God's gracious gifting. Regardless as to how much you think you do or do not have compared to the next guy, in our country and in our county we are a blessed people. This blessing of monetary wealth comes from God. **Second**, because we have been gifted by God we are stewards of what we possess. He has entrusted us with resources. Although

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our resources initially serve us this is not their ultimate design. **Third**, God's intent is that our finances would be used "to make disciples of all the nations." **Fourth**, the gifting God invites us to give is small compared to the gifting we have received. **Fifth**, as a general rule 20 percent of Christians give 80 percent of the resources. What would happen if every Christian gave something? I am not taking about percentage, only the act of regular and consistent gifting.

I am not inviting you to give in order that we might have a bigger building although we do need to be good stewards of our building which does require a "face-lift" and more classroom space. I am not inviting you to give in order that we might "meet budget." I am inviting you to give in order that we might be empowered to "shout the supremacy of God in all things and proclaim loudly that Jesus Christ is enough in this life and the life to come to every tongue, tribe, people, and nation." That is why I am inviting you to give. Let us raise up an army of people who will preach Christ crucified to the nations beginning in our own Jerusalem. What does this require? What does this demand? It demands that each of us give what we can to the mission of God in and through the local church family.

Earlier I asked, "What would happen if every Christian gave something?" Let us go back to Exodus 35 and 36 and note the conclusion of their willingness to give from the heart.

³ "They received from Moses all the contributions which the sons of Israel had brought to perform the work in the construction of the sanctuary. And *they still continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning.* ⁵ and they said to Moses, "The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which the LORD commanded us to perform." ⁶ So Moses issued a command, and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp, saying, "Let no man or woman any longer perform work for the contributions of the sanctuary." *Thus the people were restrained from bringing any more. ⁷ For the material they had was sufficient and more than enough for all the work, to perform it"* (Exod. 36:3, 5-7).

Remember this was above and beyond their normal "taxes." Friends, in the name of Christ I address you and invite you to give in order that the work of Christ would advance both locally, globally, and nationally. Our passion is to train up the next generation of church planters, to minister deeply to our own church family and to penetrate aggressively into our immediate community. This is our mission. May God act on you in such a way that your heart will make you a willing giver. Let us join together and do this for the advancement of His kingdom among all people groups so that they might see His glory and believe in His only begotten Son.