

WordBytes

What Did Jesus and The Apostles Say About Giving?

Views on giving vary significantly among Church groups and ministries. This WordByte is intended to present from the Scriptures what Jesus and the apostles taught on this very important and sometimes controversial topic.

Who should we give to?

Our own relatives, especially our immediate family

The apostle Paul said that if we don't provide for them we have denied the faith and are worse than an unbeliever! He particularly singled out relatives who are widows for assistance (1 Timothy 5:8 and 16).

The poor, and those in need

Scriptures about giving to the poor and needy far outnumber any other references to giving in the New Testament. Paul exhorted believers to do good to all, especially to fellow believers (Galatians 6:10). There are frequent references to collections for believers in need (Acts 4:34-35, Acts 11:29, Romans 15:26, and 2 Corinthians 9:12), with particular emphasis on helping widows and orphans (Acts 6:1, James 1:27).

Someone in trouble

Jesus gave us the example of the parable of the "Good Samaritan" who stopped to help a man attacked and beaten by robbers and paid for him to be taken care of at an inn (Luke 10:29-37).

Local church ministers

The Scriptures indicate that some of the elders in the early church received financial support, especially those involved in teaching the word (1 Timothy 5:17-18, and Galatians 6:6).

Note: *In the early church, oversight, teaching and pastoral functions were provided in each city church by a group of elders who were also referred to as overseers or bishops.)*

Parachurch ministries

Travelling ministries, including the apostle Paul, received financial support from the early churches (1 Corinthians 9:3-12, Philippians 4:10-20, and 3 John 1:5-8). Sometimes Paul worked at his trade of tent making either because support wasn't available (Acts 18:1-4) or to avoid criticism (1 Corinthians 9:12-18). He also organized international relief collections for Judean believers during a famine (Acts 11:27-30, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 8-9).

How much and how often should we give?

Regularly as we have prospered

When collecting for the needy believers in Judea, Paul told each believer at Corinth to lay something aside weekly as he has prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2).

As we purpose in our heart

Later he exhorted each believer to give as he purposes in his heart, generously, cheerfully and not as a grudging obligation (2 Corinthians 9:5-7).

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Giving and receiving

Jesus taught that when we give it will come back to us in the same proportion to our giving (Luke 6:38). How this principle was taught in the early church is illustrated in the apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthian church when he likened their giving to the Judean believers to sowing seed and reaping a harvest

(2 Corinthians 9:6). He indicated that the harvest would include spiritual as well as financial blessing, including the prayers of those they were giving to (2 Corinthians 9:11-14). Another example is when the Philippian church sent him financial help several times when he was in need during his ministry journey. He said that they were the only church who shared with him "concerning giving and receiving, and that God would supply all their needs according to His riches in glory" (Philippians 4:10-19).

Note: *Whereas these Scriptures clearly encourage us to give knowing that we will be rewarded, they **do not teach us to give in order to receive**. In fact, Paul specifically warns us against supposing that "godliness is a means of gain" (1 Timothy 6:3-5). Our motivation should be to bless and meet the needs of others rather than gaining for ourselves! In fact, Jesus said that "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).*

What about tithing?

What did Jesus say?

Jesus reaffirmed that tithing was obligatory under the Law of Moses (Matthew 23:23, Luke 1:42, and Luke 18:11-14). However, there is no record of Him saying whether tithing would be applied to Gentile believers.

What did the apostles say?

In their letter to the Gentile churches, the apostles confirmed that Gentile believers were not obligated to keep the Law of Moses, and did not mention tithing as an exception (Acts 15:23-29).

The apostle Paul never mentioned tithing when he was teaching on giving.

The only reference to tithing in the new testament other than when Jesus reaffirmed that it was obligatory under the Law is in Hebrews 7:1-10. In this passage, the writer (traditionally believed to be Paul) was teaching on the superiority of Jesus as High priest over the Levitical priesthood. There is no indication that he was implying that Gentile believers were obligated to tithe. (See [JO-AL WordBytes](#) "Why Melchizedek")

Paul warned us that falling under the Law of Moses can separate us from Christ and cut us off from His blessings (Galatians 5:2-4). Likewise, Jesus said that the traditions of men can make the word of God of no effect (Mark 7:13). We need to be careful to avoid these pitfalls as they can hinder us from receiving the blessings that God promises us when we give freely and generously as we purpose in our heart.

Alan Taylor

Managing Director

JO-AL Bible Teachings & Publications

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WordBytes are Bible teachings to inspire faith and spiritual growth.

JO-AL Bible Teaching & Publications is based in Melbourne, Australia, and was founded by Alan and Joan Taylor in 2009. Alan and Joan have experience in pastoring and pioneering churches, and in travelling teaching, worship, and music ministry. At the same time they have established a successful secular technical consulting company.