

Healthy Churches Give

Philippians 4:15, “...no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only...”

Introduction: Paul’s first letter to Timothy says, “Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God” (1 Timothy 5:3-4). There is a circular family principle here. It begins with the parents and grandparents who cared for us when we could not care for ourselves—they gave to us when they were healthy. Yet, when they grow old and too weak and tired to care for themselves—we are to give aid to them. We “repay” them when we are in the prime of health what they once gave us when they were in the prime of their health. Healthy people are able to help and give. One day, we will get old and tired and will have very little left to give. Others may very well need to take care of us. But, while we are healthy we should do what we can to give. Can we say the same thing about churches? Churches who have nothing left to give are churches who are on their last legs and close to dying. Churches that are thriving and blessed are able to bless others and abound in God’s work—healthy churches give! They give of their time, their energy, their money, their possessions, their all! Freely we have received of God, and freely we must give (Matthew 10:8). Notice how giving has been a part of God’s people throughout the generations and what a giving spirit says about us.

I. Giving Has Long Been A Part of God’s Plan

A. From the very beginning, God has always required offerings be given to Him for His work and for His people.

1. Cain and Abel both gave “offerings” to the Lord, although Abel’s was accepted and Cain’s was rejected (Genesis 4:3-4).
2. Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek—a priest of God (Genesis 14:18-20).
3. The law of Moses taught Israelites to give prescribed offerings (Malachi 3:8).
4. The children of Israel also had a place for freewill offerings (Exodus 35:4-5, 21, 22, 29; Exodus 36:5).
5. So, when the church was established God also established a means of supporting his ministers and the needy within the church—giving.
 - i. This giving was corporate—a church collection (1 Corinthians 16:1-4).
 - ii. But, was also done individually (Ephesians 4:28; cp. Luke 10:30-36).

B. God has been carving out a giving spirit among His people, then, from the very start.

II. Giving Says Something About...

A. Our godliness

1. God gave the best heaven could offer, “...gave His only begotten Son...” (Jn 3:16).
2. Paul says, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).
3. James wrote, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights...” (James 1:17).

B. Our Christ-likeness

1. Christ gave all, allowed Himself to be sacrificed, for our gain (1 John 3:16-17).
2. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, "...you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."
3. Personal sacrifice is at the heart of true giving.

C. Our love for others.

1. As Paul urged Corinth to give "for the ministering of the saints" he also said "I am testing the sincerity of your love..." (2 Corinthians 8:4,8).
2. Giving of our material means blesses the needy among God's people and those serving in God's kingdom (Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Philippians 4:14-19).
3. The second great command: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:29).

III. A Healthy Church, Then, Gives In A Proper Spirit

A. Liberally, rather than sparingly (2 Corinthians 9:10-15; cp. Romans 12:8).

1. The one who sows more seed will grow more crop and have more profit.
2. The church who is more generous will have more opportunity to take part in a spiritual harvest of souls.

B. Cheerfully, rather than grudgingly (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

1. Our outlook should be positive in our giving rather than resentful.
2. We have a part in saving souls and helping the needy, why should we be "grudging" about helping God's creation (cp. Deuteronomy 15:7-11)?

C. Sacrificially, rather than selfishly (Mark 12:41-44).

1. The "widow's mite" teaches us it is not the amount, but the sacrifice which pleases God with regard to our giving.
2. One can give a large amount and not make any sacrifices at all.

D. Privately, rather than ostentatiously (Matthew 6:1-4).

1. Though we are to give we ought to be careful not to do so to "be seen of men."
2. So, as individuals, we must be careful not to use our giving to brag or as a tool to threaten: "If this doesn't happen my way, I'll quit giving to the church."

E. Thoughtful, rather than neglectful (Deuteronomy 18:4-5; Proverbs 3:9-10).

1. God wants the "first fruits" of our prosperity, not the leftovers.
2. To give God what amounts to our pocket change is to neglect to keep God first in our thoughts.

Conclusion: Could your personal giving be described as liberal, cheerful, sacrificial, private and thoughtful? A healthy church is made up of healthy-minded people who trust and obey the Lord's every command—even if it affects their pocketbook. Of course, giving can be much more than money too—we can give of our time, our ability, our helpful hands and so much more. A church quick to give is a church who will please God, the greatest giver of all! As we close, let's ask, at this time that we remember our giving God who gave us the very best, His Son, to meet a need for His people. May we ever strive to give to others as God has given to us. And, if you have not yet acted in obedient faith to receive this free gift why wait?