

## The Grace of Giving

The grace of giving is often a tremendous stimulant to the life of faith. This is why the offering is correctly placed as part of the worship experience . . .

If our spiritual vitality seems low, if Bible study produces only dusty words, if prayer seems hollow and empty, then perhaps a prescription of lavish and joyful giving is just what we need. Giving brings authenticity and vitality to our devotional experience.

Money is an effective way of showing our love to God because it is so much a part of us. One economist put it this way: "Money as a form of power is so intimately related to the possessor that one cannot consistently give money without giving self." In a sense, money is coined personality, so tied to who we are that when we give it we are giving ourselves. We sing, "Take my life and let it be, consecrated, Lord, to Thee." But we must flesh out that consecration in specific ways, which is why the next line of the hymn says, "Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold." We consecrate ourselves by consecrating our money . . .

When we give money we are releasing a little more of our egocentric selves and a little more of our false security. John Wesley declared that "if you have any desire to escape the damnation of hell, give all you can; otherwise I can have no more hope of your salvation than that of Judas Iscariot."

Giving frees us from the tyranny of money. But we do not just give money; we give the things money has purchased. In Acts the early Christian community gave houses and land to provide funds for those in need (Acts 4:32-37). Have you ever considered selling a car or a stamp collection to help finance someone's education? Money has also given us the time and leisure to acquire skills. What about giving those skills away? Doctors, dentists, lawyers, computer experts, and many others can give their skills for the good of the community.

Giving frees us to care. It produces an air of expectancy as we anticipate what God will lead us to give. It makes life with God an adventure of discovery. We are being used to help make a difference in the world, and that is worth living for and giving for.

### CONTROLLING AND USING

Although giving must have a large place in Christian experience, the control and use of money must have an even larger place. Believers who are rightly taught and disciplined are enabled to hold possessions without corruption and use them for the greater purposes of the kingdom of God.



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The truth is that total divestiture is usually a very poor way to help the poor. Certainly it is vastly inferior to the proper management and use of resources. How much better to have wealth and resources in the hands of those who are properly disciplined and informed by a Christian world view than to abandon these things to the servants of mammon!

Abraham managed large holdings for the glory of God and the greater public good. So did Job and David and Solomon. In the New Testament Nicodemus used both his wealth and his high position for the good of Christian fellowship . . .

The call of God is upon us to use money within the confines of a properly disciplined spiritual life and to manage money for the good of all humanity and for the glory of God. And when this is done we are drawn deeper into the divine Center. We stand amazed that God would use our meager efforts to do his work upon the earth. . . Money is a blessing when it is used within the context of the life and power of God (pp. 42-46).



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