

# The Five Spiritual Disciplines: Giving

## Introduction

The Spiritual Disciplines are those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity practiced by the people of God since biblical times. They are God-given means we use in the Spirit-filled pursuit of Godliness.

[1 Tim 4:7](#) - But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and *exercise thyself rather unto godliness.*

The second spiritual discipline in this core seminar series is Giving. There are a few questions I hope to answer during our seminar this evening:

- Why is giving a spiritual discipline?
- How do we grow in the discipline of giving?

May our time together encourage you in your walk with Christ as you grow in the discipline of giving.

## What kind of Giving?

According to statistics, the United States is one of the most generous nations in the world. In 2023, \$374B were given charitably by individuals. That sounds like a lot of money, and it is, but when we break that down by household giving, it's estimated that American households typically give about 2-5% of their income.

Before we go further, I want to share a sense of the type of giving we find in scripture so that we might see if we have room to grow in this discipline.

### OLD TESTAMENT

Common practice was to give a tenth as an offering of acknowledging God's blessing. Prior to the law, Abraham gave the tithe (the tenth or 10%) of his spoils to Melchizedek who was called "priest of the most high God" [Heb 7:1-2](#) (See [Gen 14:14-20](#) for the account) In some places this is called the "firstfruits" with the idea being that the first portion is returned to God who gave it.

Under the law, this was shown in offerings brought to an altar, the tabernacle, the temple, and given to priests.

### NEW TESTAMENT

For New Testament Believers, there's not a concrete prescription for the amount that is to be given. As we survey the New Testament, we actually find believers giving far beyond a tenth!

- Believers in Jerusalem sold land, homes, and other possessions and gave the proceeds to the Apostles for use within the church - [Acts 4:34-37](#)
- Believers were called to give to the need of believers in other cities and did even giving "beyond their power" - [1 Cor 16:1-3](#), [2 Cor 8](#)
- Believers organized to provide for the needs of elderly widows without living family - [1 Tim 5:9-10](#), [1 Tim 5:16](#)
- Believers shared their possessions to meet the needs of those who labored in teaching God's word - [Gal 6:6](#), [1 Tim 5:17-18](#)
- Believers gave to support those engaged in what we would call "missions work" - [Phil 4:10-20](#)

It appears that believers gave **systematically, substantially, and sacrificially** to God.

I would venture to say that many Americans give in more of a occasional and sporadic manner. Giving when the heartstrings are tugged and everything aligns to contribute just enough to ease the conscience.

Growing up, one of the most memorable examples of a time to give was during Christmas at Walmart when you would hear the Salvation Army Bell Ringers. We would sometimes put coins or dollars into the little red bucket, but not always. Sometimes we just didn't have any cash. I always avoided eye-contact with the bell-ringer.

I'm not here to bash bell ringers or the charitable giving that does happen in our country, but I do want to point out that this is often far below the kind of giving we find in scripture.

## Why is giving a spiritual discipline?

We might consider material things to be entirely unspiritual. Leave money matters to Forbes and financial advisors. Christianity should only be concerned with spiritual matters.

This is simply an inaccurate understanding of scripture's teaching. The Bible has a lot to say about money, wealth, and possessions. Some 2,300 verses. It's estimated that 15% of Jesus words are on this subject too.

## Money Management is a Spiritual Matter

Giving is a vital practice for cultivating godliness because money management is an intensely spiritual matter. Our use of money reveals much about the condition of our hearts. Consider the accounts of two people: Zacchaeus and the Rich Young Ruler.

Zacchaeus was a wealthy tax collector who gained his wealth by extortion. When he meets Jesus and humbles himself, he confesses extortion and commits to making things right:

[Luke 19:8-10](#) - And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. 9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Zacchaeus' new use of money showed the truly repentant condition of his heart.

Comparatively, the rich young ruler of [Mark 10](#) comes to Jesus asking for the way to obtain eternal life. Jesus responds that the man should keep the commandments. Being raised a good Jewish boy, the young man claims to have kept every command from his youth.

Jesus loves him and goes one step further, he calls the man to sell his belongings, give to the poor, and to follow Jesus. Upon hearing those words, the young man leaves sorrowful because he had "great possessions."

What just happened? Jesus showed that though this man had checked every box, he committed the one sin at the root of all evil. He loved his wealth more than God.

## **Giving counteracts the evil of Loving Money**

[1 Tim 6:10](#) - For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The essence of godliness is loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength ([Mark 12:30](#)) and the root of evil is loving money. What we love, we serve. This is why Jesus set serving God in opposition to serving money:

[Matt 6:24](#) - No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. *Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

Giving is an essential spiritual discipline because it strikes at the root of evil, the love of money. The constant desire for more. Giving away a thing of value exercises our commitment to love and seek God.

See also: Deu 8:12-14, [Prov 30:8-9](#), [1 Tim 6:6-19](#)

## **How do we grow in giving?**

## Begin with the Heart

[2 Cor 9:7](#) - Every man according as he purposeth **in his heart**, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Giving is primarily a heart matter. Deciding in the heart to give to God out of love and with cheer. It's a joyful response to God's grace and provision in our lives. ([James 1:17](#)) If we find ourselves looking at giving sideways, we must start with scripture.

Every matter in our lives is a heart issue (beliefs and loves). Consider three elements of scripture's teaching:

### **GOD IS THE OWNER OF ALL, WE ARE STEWARDS**

[1 Cor 10:26](#) - For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

Fundamentally, the Biblical Worldview ascribes the ultimate ownership of all creation to the creator. Every molecule of the creation was created by God and for God. To claim ultimate personal ownership over a piece of ground, possessions, or financial resources is to ignore God's greater ownership.

The Bible does not deny private property rights. Humanly speaking, if you have the deed to a piece of dirt, it's yours. This is why theft is a definite moral wrong before God.

However it does highlight that our assets have been entrusted to us by God. Biblical Stewardship is the idea that we are responsible to God to use His property in accordance with the instruction and principles of His word.

[1 Cor 4:2](#) - Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

See also: [Col 1:16](#), [1 Tim 6:7](#), [Hag 2:8](#)

### **GIVING IS WORSHIP & AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GOD'S OWNERSHIP**

[1 Chron 29:14](#) - But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

Since all belongs to God, he must be acknowledged first before we use His resources for other matters.

See also: [Gen 28:22](#)

## GIVING IS A GREAT BLESSING TO THE GIVER

This portion is especially important if giving is terrifying for you. Scripture calls us to trust God's heart. God gave us Giving as a means of blessing and joy!

[Acts 20:35](#) - I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to **support the weak**, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is **more blessed to give than to receive**.

As much as our giving is a blessing to others, it blesses the cheerful giver more. In giving, we accumulate treasure, reward in heaven ([Matt 6:20](#)) and gain fruit that abounds to our account ([Phil 4:17](#)).

Jesus said that, we can absolutely trust God to provide for our needs. ([Luke 6:38](#)).

**Growth Step:** Study & believe the truth about money and giving

### Commit to giving by faith

[2 Cor 9:7](#) - Every man according *as he purposeth* in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

We might consider 10% a good starting point (but not a law or limit) for our practice of giving. Using a percentage also highlights **proportional giving**.

Some may think they don't have enough to start giving. I'll give when I get more money. But proportional giving means that even if you just have \$10, you can give \$1. Everyone can give in proportion to what God has entrusted them with.

**Growth Step:** Purpose in your heart what you will give on a regular basis

### Prepare Diligently

[1 Cor 16:2](#) - Upon the first day of the week **let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him**, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Paul instructed the Corinthian church in their preparations for giving, by weekly setting aside what they would give. The spiritual discipline of giving calls for a regular preparation to give a portion of our income when the church is assembled.

Practically speaking this means:

1. **Know your income** - We give in proportion as God has given increase. You may need to get out a calculator, work through bank statements, or create a budget.
2. **Set aside a portion for giving** - Calculate the portion you've purposed to give and be ready to give it. Setting aside giving first and foremost ensures that it is not forgotten or consumed by other wants.
3. **Regularly bring your offering** - I believe scripture indicates a regular cadence for giving. Consider giving on the same schedule you are paid.

**Growth Step:** Predetermine what, when, and how you will give.

## Give Collaboratively

Giving is always to God, but for the New Testament believer we give to God by giving to individuals or through our local church.

In most of the examples we have previously named, individual believers brought their giving together and as a body used it in an organized manner to meet needs, provide for leadership, and advance the Gospel. This is not to say that giving to individuals or organizations is wrong or unimportant. To also give to meet the need of our brothers, widows, or our fellow-man is good and godly.

At Vision, when we give in-person or online, there are a few options for designation:

- "**General**" includes the operating expenses of the ministry, benevolence, personnel, and facilities.
- "**Faith Promise**" is for the missions support and projects
- "**Nehemiah**" fund is specifically set aside for future construction and building expansion.

## Consider Regular & Spontaneous Giving

Comfort tends to draw us in and stunt our spiritual growth. Consider where God may be leading you to grow in giving.

Personally, regular giving is fairly comfortable. I can budget it out and it becomes routine. Spontaneous giving is a bit uncomfortable, it breaks my plans!

You might be like me, or it might be more normal to give when you feel like God wants you to, but committing to regular giving is scary.

*If you're strong in one, develop the other.*

Growth Step:

- If you're weak in regular giving, commit to trust God in regular, systematic giving
- If you're weak in spontaneous giving, respond to opportunities to give beyond regular giving and trust God in sacrifice

## **Maintain a Worshipful Heart in Giving**

Remember the core of giving; a cheerful heart. In all your giving, keep an eye on the heart of giving. If giving becomes routine or grudging you may need to check your heart, or you may even need to adjust the method of your giving.

I'll share a personal example. Lauryn and I gave online for years. It was convenient, it worked, but I found that giving became more like paying a bill. So, we went back to writing a check and putting it in the basket. It just has a different feel where we are coming and bringing our offering together.

## **Closing**

For some, the application of this seminar will be:

- rearrange your beliefs on money
- prayerfully calculate what you should give
- begin stewarding your money diligently
- start giving regularly

Regular giving is a major spiritual breakthrough and a huge step of faith that will be blessed by God. God loves a cheerful giver and generously provides for us as we walk by faith in him!

Lean into giving as a practice of love for God, gratitude for his gifts, and cheerful opportunity to honor God, bless others, and participate in Gospel ministry.

## **Practical Questions to Consider**

1. Is there a fear or unbiblical belief about money that is holding you back from regularly giving by faith?
2. Where do you find yourself failing to acknowledging God's ownership over your material possessions?
3. Where do you need to focus on growing in the discipline of giving?

## **Additional Resources**

## Scripture Readings

- Matthew 6
- 2 Corinthians 8-9
- 1 Timothy 6

## Recommended Books

- Foundations Book 2; Lesson 9 "Giving" (<https://baptistfoundations.com/materials/foundations-2/2-9>)
- *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* (long version) or *The Treasure Principle* (short version) by Randy Alcorn