

Giving is good for you

What does the New Testament mean when it expects Christians to give generously, sacrificially, joyfully? The Bible's teaching on giving starts with 10%. The first tenth of all we earn or receive belongs to God. That is our basic planned giving. The remaining nine tenths he allows us to live on and to use – though there are guidelines for its use. We must provide for our families. We must also give from that 90% – generous giving; giving where the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing; spontaneous unplanned giving; giving that involves sacrifice. This giving comes from the 90%.



Giving isn't primarily about meeting needs, though those are there. In church life we need to pay for ministry, for buildings, for mission and outreach, and good works of many kinds. Without those we cease to be church. And giving isn't primarily about pleasing God, although it may do that. God loves us anyway. He loves us because of his grace, not because of our good works.

Giving is primarily about our response to the One who made us and redeemed us. It is saying to God, "You come first in my life". It is saying, "I belong to you". Giving is one element of discipleship – being a follower of Jesus. Giving is also one of the keys to formation – becoming Christ-like.

Of course we should respond to need. Cancer Research, Christian Aid, the Leprosy Mission, your local parish church, special disaster appeals – these are all real needs. We should have some idea of what the needs are, and some view of how to prioritise our giving. The Church of England's recommendation that half our giving should go to our local church, and the second half to other causes, is a good place to start.

But responding to need isn't at the heart of it. At the very heart of giving is responding to Christ:

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Are we starting with 10% as our core giving? Is half of that going to our parish church? Is there joyful free-will giving, over and beyond that amount? (Incidentally, the average giving of regular worshippers in Peterborough Diocese is 3.1% of income. If that rose to just 4%, our diocesan money worries would be over, and we would be able to do so much more mission and kingdom work.)

With best wishes

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