

How to Get Good at Giving

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Good morning, Lighthouse, are you ready for the Word of God this morning?

Although what we are going to do today normally comes in the month of December, **today is Heart of Purpose Sunday at Lighthouse Baptist Church.**

This is the day that we, as a Church, will obey the New Testament command of our Lord as laid out for us in II Corinthians...that every one of us will purpose in his/her heart what we are going to give to the Lord this coming year.

Once each year we stop and take inventory as to where we are in our ability to trust the Lord and we make a decision...a personal choice, as to what percentage of the income that God provides to us that we will give back in honor to Him...on top of His tithe, the first ten percent that is already His.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

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.

8 And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all

sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

When we got saved, our lives were changed forever. Inwardly the Holy Spirit of God came to live within us bringing new life new peace and new purpose.

Outwardly we were faced with dealing with our sins and all the New Testament commands of Christ. Although these commands are not grievous or burdensome, obeying some of them creates a far different environment than we are used to.

Even something as simple as coming to Church every Sunday requires a very different pattern than before.

One of the early-on changes that we all must face is becoming a generous and cheerful giver.

For some, this is very easy, depending on how you were raised and what you are already used to.

For others, you would think we ask you to become a monk or something. I don't want to say that you are stingy but, yeah, the truth is that some of us have a real stingy streak that we need to overcome.

You would probably get mad at me if I just came out and said you were stingy; so let's just say that you might be somewhat "generosity challenged".

Actually, if you look up the Greek word in verse 6 for "sparingly"; the synonym is "stingily".

Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; **good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over**, shall men give into your bosom. **For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.**

I am here to tell you - and I am living proof as well - that even if you are generosity challenged, you can still get good at giving.

I know all of us would like to become good at giving; if for no other reason than being good at giving requires that you have an abundance to give from.

Last week we learned how to go about effecting real and permanent change in our Christian life.

One of the suggested changes we might want to make in 2017 was: Maybe you would like to become a faithful tither?

So, how about it? Would you like to become a faithful tither? How about going beyond that and actually get good at giving in 2017?

Today we are going to go back through those principles we learned last week and apply them to getting good at giving in 2017.

First of all:

I. Decide what you really want to change.

A. Be specific.

1. First of all giving is not an elective that you can do or not do for some sort of extra credit; **faithful tithing and giving is a New Testament command.**

2. Some New Testament commands were also Old Testament commands as well; like the very first one.

3. **Matthew 22:37-40**

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

4. The commands to love and to give are specifically connected.

a. **The first commandment is to love.**

b. As it tells us, speaking of giving in II Corinthians, giving is the proof of our love.

2 Corinthians 8:24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

c. **1 Corinthians 16:22** If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. Those words mean **“cursed to receive the judgment of Christ at His coming”!**

5. The Lord, as you can see, is dead serious about our obedience!

2. That would be why God is giving you a new opportunity to start fresh today with a new plan and a better understanding.

Conclusion:

Don't you really want to get good at giving?

“But pastor, you don't understand; I'm on a fixed income.”

No, you're on a broke income that needs to be fixed!

Do you honestly think God can't find a way to bless you because you are on a fixed income?

I remember when Larry and Jane were on a broke fixed income; God found a way to fix your fixed income didn't He, Jane?

Trust the Lord, He will keep His Word.

He died and was buried and rose again to save you?

Did you trust Him to save you?

Did He not save you as He promised?

Will He not also keep His other promises?

“Ok Pastor, what percentage do you think I ought to give?” Let me help you decide:

6. The Lord makes this so easy...you don't need to do anything until first the Lord puts the income in your hand.

You should also:

V. Prepare for disappointment.

A. Every great success is an accumulation of failures learned from.

1. Early on when you first commit yourself to get good at giving, you can just about mark it down that you will be tested.

2. **Genesis 22:1** And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham...

3. You know the story how that God told Abraham to offer his son Isaac on the altar.

4. Did God not know if Abraham really believed Him or not?

5. Of course He did; it was Abraham that could not know for sure until he was tested.

B. So, what if you freak out and don't pass your test?

1. Maybe like last time you committed yourself to faithfully tithe and God did not bless because He already knew you were not seriously committed.

6. Giving specifically entails tithing, a regular offering above the tithe as well as unspecified offerings the Lord may lead you to give from time to time.

7. Even though these things are commanded, the change will never be accomplished until you want it.

The 2nd aspect of making this change is:

B. Be reasonable.

1. When the rich sinner Zacchaeus (who was the chief tax collector) met Jesus, he immediately became what some would call extreme as a giver.

2. **Luke 19:8** 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.

3. Everyone can tithe and everyone can give.

4. However, depending on the level of your faith, you may need to start with just a small percentage above your tithe and then raise that over time as the Lord blesses you and your faith increases.

Next is:

C. Be right.

1. Do it for a righteous reason.
2. With giving, this is easy to determine.
3. You do it because the Lord commands it.
4. And you do it because you love Him.
5. “not grudgingly, or of necessity” which means NOT because you have to and NOT because the Church needs the money. (Although some of you obviously decided the Church didn’t need your money).
6. Also NOT because you are going to gain from it, even though you will.

Then:

D. Don't be afraid.

1. Does a commitment to tithing and giving or to raising your offering create fear?
2. It apparently does.
3. Let me ask, when has the Lord ever failed to do in your life as He promised?
4. **2 Corinthians 9:8** And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

e. Not only does this give the Lord His first, it involves Him in the business of making sure the profit actually happens.

4. Lisa and I have been practicing this plan for decades and since we began giving this way I’ve never yet to this day lost money on a job.
5. Go try and find a construction outfit anywhere that can say that!

Once you have established your plan:

IV. Do it.

1. Set a start date and begin.
2. Put your plan in motion.
3. Do it well!
4. In this case, doing it well means being faithful.
5. Your goal is not a dollar amount; the Bible teaches us to give by percentage; “as God has prospered”.
6. You don’t know what your income will be; It may not increase right away for a host of reasons; but everyone can give a percentage off the top of whatever God provides.

1. Because of direct deposit and auto-pay or other considerations some may need to give online; and you can do that.
2. It is better if you give directly to the Church and BRING it with you for obvious cost and commandment reasons; but if you need to do it online, we have that service available for you.

C. For some, it is more complex.

1. Those in business rarely know how much they actually make from week to week.
2. You may need a different plan.
3. In our construction business we know the projected percentage of profit we have built in to our bids; as I'm sure you know the projected margin in yours.
 - a. Let's say you got a deposit of \$10,000 on a job.
 - b. And your projected net profit was 30%.
 - c. And your tithe plus your chosen offering was 20%; then the math is simple.
 - d. The profit is projected to be \$3,000; 20% of \$3,000 is \$600 and you write the check and bring it on Sunday.

5. Why is it so hard to believe the Lord wants to do that for you?

6. You **can** do this and there is no call to be afraid.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Once you have made your decision:

II. Determine a course of action.

A. Determine exactly what must change.

1. With this particular decision, only a few changes may be required.
2. You will need to adjust the way you pay your bills.
3. When you receive income, your offering to the Lord should be the first thing that comes out of it.
4. **Proverbs 3:9-10**
 9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the **firstfruits** of all thine increase:
 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.
5. **Tithing and giving is not about money, it's about honor.**

6. When reproving Israel over their failure to tithe and their unacceptable offerings the Lord said this in

Malachi 1:6 A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts...

B. You may need a change of attitude.

1. You certainly will not change your lack of generous giving if you still don't believe God is challenging us to do this.

2. Some still refuse to believe in tithing.

3. Study your Bible; tithing was practiced before the law, commanded in the law and commended by Jesus in the New Testament.

4. **Leviticus 27:30** And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land, *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the LORD'S: *it is* holy unto the LORD.

5. When did the tithe ever stop belonging to or being holy to the Lord?

6. Even if you genuinely believed that tithing is not a New Testament command, you couldn't possibly justify honoring the Lord with less than you would tip a waitress.

7. Your problem is not scriptural interpretation; your problem is that you are "generosity challenged".

Next:

III. Develop a plan.

A. For most, this is pretty simple.

1. First you are going to determine, starting today, what percentage above the Lord's tithe you will give; say, 5%.

2. You get your check or the notice of your direct deposit.

3. You look at the gross pay, and multiply that gross pay by .15; which is 10% tithe and 5% offering.

4. You write the check and BRING it on Sunday.

1 Corinthians 16:2 Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him...

5. **1 Chronicles 16:29** Give unto the LORD the glory *due* unto his name: **bring an offering**, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

B. A plan must be specific steps.