

Giving at Sonlife

One of the questions we frequently hear among Christians is “How much should I give to my local church?” Some would say 10%, others may say it doesn’t really matter and some would say nothing at all! So here is an attempt to explain Sonlife Church’s understanding of giving.

When we think of financial giving it’s best to start with God. As we read the Bible we find out that God is a generous Father who delights in giving gifts to his children. Our gracious God is a generous God who ultimately gave us the greatest gift, Jesus Christ his one and only Son (John 3:16). The cross is a picture of the grace of God in giving us eternal fellowship with him through the person of Christ. In addition, when we received Jesus we are also given the Holy Spirit in whom God pours out his unconditional love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5).

Therefore the reason why Christians give is because God gave, and hence our giving is an expression of God’s grace towards us. The Bible describes our giving as both an act of service to God’s people as well as an act of worship to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:4, 9:12,13). This leaves us with the question “How much should I give?”

If we look in the Old Testament we find the word “tithe” which means a “tenth” (Gen. 14:20, 28:22, Lev. 27:30, Num. 18:21ff, Deut. 12:5ff, 14:22ff). Back then it was a common practice for God’s people to give 10% of their income to the work of the priest. It is important to also note there were other types of giving found in the Old Testament, with some scholars suggesting the combined total amount would be approximately 25% of the family’s income! However, while the word “tithe” is still often used to describe our giving in church, in the New Testament, it is only mentioned a few times and usually associated in a negative tone (Matt. 23:23, Luke 11:42, 18:12). With the ministry of Jesus we are not required to follow certain Old Testament laws and thus giving is no longer about a percentage but rather the posture of one’s heart.

Based on Scriptures here are some guidelines we believe all Sonlifers should consider when giving and tithing:

- **Give Cheerfully**

We are told that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:11). So as we give may our heart posture be one of rejoicing in the Lord. Give believing that amount will go towards kingdom work in this city and beyond.

- **Give Generously**

In 2 Cor. 8-9 the Macedonian church gave generously even under severe trials. They gave even beyond their means and pleaded for the privilege in doing so! Lets be radically generous not out of obligation but rather as a privilege in worship.

- **Give Proportionally**

Paul encourages the Corinthian Church to give according to their means (2 Cor. 8:11-12). The principle in Christian giving is proportionate giving. Ask God to give us the grace to give according to what he has blessed us with.

- **Give Regularly**

In 1 Cor. 16 Paul explains the discipline of setting aside an amount for giving on the first day of the week. As Christians we are called to give regularly for kingdom work and this will require self-discipline.

- **Give Secretly**

The reality is we have the propensity to want the praises of people and if giving is not done secretly we may fall into the trap of pride (Matt. 6:4)

Some people may ask where or whom should our giving be directed to. In the Bible, God instructs us to use our finances to provide for our family and relatives in need (1 Tim. 5:8) and to the poor and needy (Matt 6:2, James 2:15,16). However the main focus of giving in the NT after the death of Jesus is in the context of the local church (e.g. 1 Cor. 16:1, 2). We would therefore encourage you to give your tithes to your local church family since it is your spiritual home and the place where you will grow in the Lord.

A believer's giving to the local church, serves to support the various ministries of the church that all ultimately help to build up the body of Christ and to promote the gospel. According to the Scriptures this support extends to those who oversee the church and preach the Word of God (1 Tim. 5:17-18, 1 Cor. 9:13,14).

If you are unsure how much to give we personally think 10% is a good starting point. This should not be our goal in giving but rather where we should commence our giving. The reality is everything belongs to God (Ps. 24:1, 89:11, Heb. 2:10), and we are stewards therefore we are not giving God back anything but rather holding onto an amount for our personal use.

The bottom line is at Sonlife Church we are less concerned about a percentage or the amount given but more concerned with the posture of the giver's heart. May your giving for the work of the Lord be done cheerfully, generously, proportionately, regularly and secretly.

Sonlife Church Elders