

Thoughts on Giving

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If you have read the above title, chances are you immediately thought this is to be an article about giving money. While it is certainly true that the Lord's work cannot be accomplished without the regular contributions of its members, it is also true that the giving of other things is just as important as the giving of money.

Give self. In order to be right with God one must dedicate his life to the Lord. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice to God" (Romans 12:1). That's a total giving of one's self to Him. It means you subordinate your will to His, present yourself to His control, realizing that such a giving will eventually return to you in greater measure when this life is over. And so to give yourself to Him is a reasonable presentation, the only one that makes any sense (Romans 12:2).

That gift of self means that we must:

Give time. Obviously, life is made up of time. Actually, time is all we've got, and so the value of it cannot be properly measured. Life is about time; time is about life. And since the proper use of our time determines our eternal destiny (Ecclesiastes 12:13), it behooves us to take a careful look at how we use it.

It takes time to reflect on our spiritual maturity, to plan ways and means for making ourselves better and more productive as His disciples. It takes time to reflect on our spiritual potentials and deficiencies. It takes time to learn; it takes time to teach; it takes time to find ways react properly to the difficulties of life; it takes time to make corrections. It just takes time to serve God as we ought.

Every person has the same amount of time available. That age-old excuse "I don't have time," which is so often used to excuse us from our personal responsibilities, is not so. The problem is not with the lack of sufficient time, but the failure to budget the time we have so as to make good use of it. Yes, we do have the time; it's just a matter of when and how we use it. But beware. Time may run out before long.

Give attention. The people in Nehemiah 8, brought about the ancient Jewish restoration after having heard their leaders read from the book of God; they "...stood up," a sure indication that they had paid attention to what was said. Their having

carefully heard the word resulted in their determination to restore what had been lost. They heard. They did.

When Jesus spoke with the two men on the road to Emmaus, following His resurrection, He “expounded to them in all the scriptures concerning Himself” (Luke 24: 27). They must have heard carefully for they later exclaimed excitedly, “did not our hearts burn within us when He talked with by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?” Those who give attention to His word get closer and closer Him who gave it and are far less likely to be duped by the follies of the world.

Give talent. God has blessed us all with life, time, and talent (Acts 17:25 and 28). Far too many people spend their time and talents selfishly. There is a place in the kingdom for every kind of ability, for every natural endowment. “For the body is not one member, but many” (I Corinthians 12:14). There are no unnecessary organs in the body of Christ. “Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular” (Verse 27). There is a place for every one; and it matters not if it’s not a place of prominence, it’s still important to the body. It takes all the parts—each working his own work—to make the body function effectively. And let it be carefully observed that man is as responsible for how he uses his God-given abilities for the good of the kingdom as he is for making his own secular gain.

Give money. Yes, God wants every man to give of his monetary means. That giving is necessary to the continued function of the local fellowship. It cannot operate at the level it should without the funds to help. “...let everyone of you lay by in store” (I Corinthians 16:2) should not be viewed as some imposing responsibility, but a high privilege to show to God our respect and appreciation for His gifts. There are numbers of personal opportunities for giving outside the work of the church, too—opportunities to be of service and to personal help to the less fortunate. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:37-39) includes providing personal help for the less fortunate. They should not be overlooked nor counted trivial.

“God so loved that He gave...” Need more be said?