

Giving – A Position Paper For South Mountain Community Church

Giving is a privilege and delight for those who consider SMCC their church home. We don't take a formal offering as part of our service, instead, we have offering boxes located at the back of the Worship Center and near our front door. We also have an automatic and online giving service for your convenience.

Why should a person give a tithe (10% of their income)?

Jesus said that we cannot serve both God and money (Matt. 6:24). This means that it is impossible to be committed to both. We are either a slave to God or a slave to money. Because money is an opiate that addicts as easily as any drug, its power to change us is comparable to the power of God. A good reason to give is so that we might break free of the stranglehold of money. Jesus also said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt. 6:21) We can direct our heart by giving God's money back to Him, in worship.

Giving is first and foremost an act of worship. When a person worships they are demonstrating that God is worth everything they can give Him; praise, thanksgiving, honor, and gifts. It is normal for those who have been "filled" and "satisfied" and "forgiven" by Christ, to want to give. We see this as being true with the Magi (Matt. 2:11), the "sinful woman" who anointed Jesus' feet with perfume (Luke 7:36-47), and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Jesus said that he "did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28) It makes sense that a believer who is becoming more and more like Jesus Christ becomes more and more a giver. Being a generous giver is simply a matter of becoming Christ-like.

Another reason a believer would want to give a tithe is that he or she is to be a good "steward" or manager of what God has entrusted to them. God has given each of us a measure of time (Eph. 5:15-16), abilities, and resources to be managed in such a way that He receives glory. A good steward has given up his right to self-determination. He or she recognizes that everything they have is from God and to be viewed as a trust. From the New Testament, in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) we learn that Jesus expects us to manage well all that He gives us so that we will have something more to give to Him. If we understand that it all belongs to God and we are simply managers, we will be more inclined to ask, "How much should I keep?", instead of "How much should I give?" The important lesson for a manager / steward to learn is that the amount of money given is not nearly as

important as being found faithful. We all want to hear from Jesus, "Well done, good and faithful servant".

The third reason a believer should be a giver of a tithe is because it is an important spiritual discipline. Spiritual disciplines are those activities (prayer, Bible intake, worship, fasting, solitude, serving, and more) that put us in a position for God to grow us. We cannot be godly by trying to be godly, but instead, by focusing our attention and energies on developing a relationship with God. When we give money we are in effect saying "no" to our natural tendencies to hoard or consume. And it is natural to want to put our security in saving more than we need (see Matt. 6:19-20). Giving is a godly antidote to these tendencies. It acts as a reminder that God is our security and the provider of everything we need.

How does a person decide how much to give?

There are two types of giving described in the Bible. The first is called "tithing" and the second is called an "offering". The "tithe" is expected from all who believe in God. It was required of believers in the Old Testament and it is commanded by Christ in the New Testament. A careful study of 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 is very important:

1 Corinthians 9:13-14 - Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? 14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

It is important to notice that it is the "Lord's command" that we give in the "same way" (10%) to support our Pastors and our church. It is in that way that the Jews gave a tithe in support of their Priests.

Jesus also said to the Pharisees: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former." (Matthew 23:23) No matter what we might think about "not being under the Law", it is clear that Christ expected those who believed in Him to tithe. Besides, if we consider Christ's words offered up in His Sermon on the Mount, it is clear that the standard for righteousness for followers of Christ is higher than for those "under the Law".

Giving faithfully a "tithe" to the Lord should not be seen as fulfilling a duty so that we can do what we want with the rest of "our money". Those who give out of a sense of duty should not think that they've done well. C.S. Lewis said in his book *Mere Christianity* that too often Christians think that

because they have given their 10% they can now do whatever they want with their 90%. Duty does that to people. It ruins the spirit of love and grace that is to be present in all Christian giving. We

The best guidelines for giving an "offering" (not a tithe – this is over and above a tithe) are listed in 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9. In these two chapters the Apostle Paul mentions five principles of "graceful giving":

- giving a tithe is to be regular and purposeful, but giving an offering is either in response to a need or an opportunity to bless the Lord. (9:3)
- giving an offering is to be sacrificial (8:3)
- giving an offering should be voluntary with joy, not out of duty or under compulsion (8:3-5 and 9:7)
- giving an offering should be in some way proportionate with your income and with how one spends their discretionary income - vacations, hobbies, clothes and other (8:11-12)
- giving an offering should be generous (9:6)

The way that the Tabernacle and the Temple were built was through the generous and freewill offerings of God's people. See:

Exodus 35:20-22 - Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, 21 and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. 22 All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the LORD.

1 Chronicles 29:5-9 - Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the LORD?" Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly. 7 They gave toward the work on the temple of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred thousand talents of iron. 8 Any who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the LORD in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite. 9 The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

The new facility the SMCC is building will be built with the "free" and "willing" and "generous" gifts of God's people. This is over and above the tithe of God's people and brings much glory to God.