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Posted by revrandy - 2008/11/05 22:33

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Hi Folks:

Walt and Carolyn Barton are helping with the weekly e-mails during our Gratitude Campaign "Changing Lives for God." Here is their message for us on a day when some are worried, some are rejoicing, some are troubled and all of us are (I hope) praying for our new leaders. Let's also pray for God's help and guidance of our church as we examine the Biblical view of giving to and receiving from God.

Here are ten points of giving that I found in a sermon delivered by John MacArthur. It was a blessing to me, so I would like to share them with you. I pray they will help you, as they have me. We all are preparing to complete our "Changing Lives for God" campaign on Sunday Nov 16th. Don't forget to get signed up for our Prayer Vigil on Saturday, Nov 15th.

Principle Number One: Giving is investing with God.

(Luke 6:38), our campaign theme scripture, is a great verse to start with. "Give, and you will receive. You will be given much. Pressed down, shaken together, and running over, it will spill into your lap. The way you give to others is the way God will give to you." Giving is investing with God and the return is a now return, plus an eternal yield. Another translation says it this way, "For the measure you give will be the measure you get back." Think about that one for a while.

Principle Number Two: Giving is to be sacrificial. Pastor Randy's last sermon taught us that giving is to be sacrificial. It isn't the amount; it's just what it cost you to give. (Mark 12:41-44) "Jesus sat near the Temple money box and watched the people put in their money. Many rich people gave large sums of money. 42 Then a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which were only worth a few cents. 43 Calling his followers to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow gave more than all those rich people. 44 They gave only what they did not need. This woman is very poor, but she gave all she had; she gave all she had to live on." What else needs to be said?

Principle Number Three: Giving is not a matter of what you have.

People often say, "If I only had more I would give more". (Luke 16:10) "Whoever can be trusted with a little can also be trusted with a lot, and whoever is dishonest with a little is dishonest with a lot. 11 If you cannot be trusted with worldly riches, then who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you cannot be trusted with things that belong to someone else, who will give you things of your own?"

Principle Number Four: Giving affects spiritual riches.

(Luke 16:11) "If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous money, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" Money isn't righteous is it? Money's just neutral, but it sure makes a difference how you handle it.

Principle Number Five: Giving amounts are personally determined.

Luke 19:1-10. Jesus was going through the city of Jericho. 2 A man was there named Zacchaeus, who was a very important tax collector, and he was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but he was not able because he was too short to see above the crowd. 4 He ran ahead to a place where Jesus would come, and he climbed a sycamore tree so he could see him. 5 When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down! I must stay at your house today." 6 Zacchaeus came down quickly and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to complain, "Jesus is staying with a sinner!" 8 But Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "I will give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times more." 9 Jesus said to him, "Salvation has come to this house today". The point here is giving is spontaneously done out of love and gratitude, not out of law. That's why we call it our Gratitude campaign. We all know the ultimate example is Jesus Christ. How much did He give?

Principle Number Six: Giving is also to be in response to need.

It is true that giving is to be spontaneous and voluntary just pouring out of a loving, thankful heart, but giving also in the New Testament is to be response to need. Acts 2:43-47. "The apostles were doing many miracles and signs, and everyone felt great respect for God. All the believers were together and shared everything. They would sell their land and the things they owned and then divide the money and give it to anyone who needed it. The believers met together in the Temple every day. They ate together in their homes, happy to share their food with joyful hearts. They praised God and were liked by all the people. Every day the Lord added those who were being saved to the group of believers."

We can respond to needs equally as well as to the love and thanks in our own heart.

Principle Number Seven: Giving is to demonstrate love and not law.

2 Corinthians 8:8-9. I am not commanding you to give. But I want to see if your love is true by comparing you with others that really want to help. 9 You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know that Christ was rich, but for you he became poor so that by his becoming poor you might become rich. Giving is to demonstrate love, not grudgingly, not necessity, not legalism, but love. When you put a prescription on a giving, you give people a law to abide by rather than love and you've robbed them.

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Principle Number Eight: Giving is to be planned.

1 Corinthians 16:1, Now I will write about the collection of money for God's people. Do the same thing I told the Galatian churches to do: "2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should put aside money as you have been blessed. Save it up so you will not have to collect money after I come." What he's saying is that you need a church budget. You need to have available money to meet needs as they arise, not always banging away for special monies for special offerings for special needs. Giving then is to be done systematically, it is to be done proportionately.

Principle Number Nine: Giving is to be generous.

2 Corinthians 8:2," They have been tested by great troubles, and they are very poor. But they gave much because of their great joy. 3 I can tell you that they gave as much as they were able and even more than they could afford. No one told them to do it. 4 But they begged and pleaded with us to let them share in this service for God's people. 5 And they gave in a way we did not expect: They first gave themselves to the Lord and to us. This is what God wants." Giving is to be generous.

Principle Number Ten: Giving generously results in blessing.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8" Remember this: The person who plants a little will have a small harvest, but the person who plants a lot will have a big harvest. 7 Each of you should give as you have decided in your heart to give. You should not be sad when you give, and you should not give because you feel forced to give. God loves the person who gives happily. 8 And God can give you more blessings than you need. Then you will always have plenty of everything—enough to give to every good work." Paul said to the Philippians, because you've given so generously, God will supply all your needs. All of them!

Thanks be to God for His generosity to us. May we reflect Him well!

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