

Giving | Convictions and Practice of Local Church St. Pete

Each week we gather as a community whose identity is *in Jesus*. A people humbled by God's radical grace and generosity. Oftentimes when we talk about generosity; specifically, the giving of our money, we talk about it this way: *"We believe faithful and sacrificial giving is an expression of worship and obedience."* As followers of Jesus, we've been given the privilege to worship the Lord this way and contribute towards the mission of the gospel sacrificially and intentionally. The giving of our finances is an invitation to worship – to declare *"All that I have comes for you. What I have is a gift from your hand...I want to steward it well and I want to worship you with it."* It's also a declaration that money is not our master, Jesus is.

Regardless of how long we've been a follower of Jesus it's important to repeatedly ask these questions along the way: *"What are my convictions about the giving of my finances? How do I plan for it? Am I being faithful and sacrificial? Is it done with joy?"*

In Genesis 14, Abram (later called Abraham), responded to the king of Salem (Melchizedek) with a tithe (a tenth of everything); Abram recognized the legitimacy of Melchizedek's blessing over him but it was ultimately an expression of worship to the Lord. This ancient practice, rooted in expressed allegiance to the Lord, became a "guideline" throughout the storyline of the bible and is still a guideline for followers of Jesus today. The people of Israel gave a tithe, a tenth of all their yearly agricultural produce and a tenth of their flocks and cattle – a sacrifice of praise and devotion to God. In Leviticus 27:30-34 and Malachi 3:6-12 we discover God considers any smaller proportion as "robbery." Why? Everything Israel (and we ourselves) have is really God's – they (we) only have it because God gave it to them (us) to use.

In the New Testament we don't see a direct *command* to tithe. Instead we're to *"give as Christ gave."* The question we should ask then is *"Are we recognizing the legitimacy of what Jesus accomplished with our lives – specifically expressed through the faithful and sacrificial giving of our finances?"* Tithing then becomes a guideline for us to give radically and sacrificially; an expression of allegiance to Jesus and a participation in the work of the Kingdom of God here and now.

Consider the following principles (adapted from John Stott's book *"The Living Church"*):

- Giving is an expression of the grace of God. 2 Corinthians 8:1-6
- Giving is something we should seek to excel in. 2 Corinthians 8:7
- Giving should be inspired by the cross (the generosity we've been shown). 2 Corinthians 8:8-9
- Giving should be "according to your means." Acts 11:29
- Giving "looks like a harvest"; we "sow" it, the Lord uses it and does great things through it, oftentimes producing more than we imagined. 2 Corinthians 9:6-11
- Giving leads to thanksgiving to God (done *cheerfully* not *reluctantly*). 2 Corinthians 9:11-15
- Consider setting aside a sum of money "on the first day of the week." 1 Corinthians 16:1-3

Note the sense of "settled conviction." Decide what to give instead of simply "winging it."

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We invite our entire church community to grow in giving as an essential part of our discipleship to Jesus. As a member of LCSP we ask that you commit to the *“faithful and sacrificial”* giving of your finances. Your generosity sustains the life and community of Local Church St. Pete. It also drives the work of justice in our city, and around the world. In addition, it enables us to support church planting and church care - both locally and beyond.

How can you participate in giving? The easiest way to give is online through our secure platform. We encourage recurring donations so we know what to expect each month however, we know that isn't always possible or preferred.

There are four ways to give: (1) online through our secure platform, (2) texting 84321, (3) in person on Sundays (give boxes in the back of our gathering space) or (4) by mail. Mail checks to PO BOX 7664 St. Pete, FL 33734.

What are your convictions? Do you have any questions? Don't hesitate to reach out to info@localchurchstpete.com