

For the Love of Money: Part Three - Give

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, preached many times over the course of his life on the topic of money. To take Wesley's sermon "The Use of Money" seriously would require a whole new way of thinking about how we earn and use money in a world in which others are in want.

As church leaders wrestle daily not only with their individual circumstances but also those of the organization they lead, it would be helpful to revisit Wesley's 18th century sermon and learn applications for today.

In each section below, the "Simple Solution" lists a portion of Wesley's sermon, his most concise articulation of his views on how to use money. The sermon excerpts are adapted from *John Wesley on Christian Practice: The Standard Sermons in Modern English*, by Kenneth Cain Kinghorn.

THE QUICK SUMMARY - [Giving to God](#) by Mark Allen Powell

We all know that everything we have is a gift from God. But sometimes it's hard to know just how to give *back* to God. How much is enough? What does the Bible really say? What should giving look like in our everyday lives?

Filled with good news for followers of Jesus, Mark Allan Powell's *Giving to God* shows Christians the way to a better life and a better relationship with their money — and with God. Powell presents stewardship as an act of worship, an expression of faith, and a discipline for spiritual growth. Faithful use of our time, talents, and money starts with a deep, satisfying relationship with the God to whom we belong.

We can then learn, says Powell, to give gladly and generously out of our heartfelt connection with God. Informative, concise, and eminently practical (including discussion questions), *Giving to God* gives us resources for best using the treasures, material and otherwise, that God has given us.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

First, having gained all you can and, second, having saved all you can, *then give all you can*.

In order to see the basis and objective of this rule, consider the following point. When the owner of heaven and earth brought you into being and placed you in this world, He positioned you here not as an owner. He placed you on earth as a steward or manager. As such, for a time he deposited various kinds of goods with you. But the sole ownership of these things still rests in God, and they can never be taken from Him. Because you are not your own, neither are the possessions that you enjoy.

Even your soul and body are not yours — they belong to God. And your possessions in particular

do not really belong to you. In the most clear and explicit terms, God has revealed how you are to employ yourself and your possessions. You are to use them in a way that becomes “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

If you want to be a faithful and wise steward of the things that God has presently put into your hands (with the right to take them back whenever it pleases Him), ask these questions:

- (1) In spending this money, am I acting according to my character? Am I acting not as an owner, but as a steward of my Lord’s goods?
- (2) Am I giving this money in obedience to God’s Word? In what scripture does God require me to spend this money?
- (3) Can I offer up this action or expenditure as a sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ?
- (4) Do I have reason to believe that for this very work I will receive a reward at the resurrection of the righteous?

You will seldom need anything more than these questions to remove any doubt that may arise.

Faithful giving is part of faithful living – it is one way of using our finances in a manner that is pleasing to God.

Why is this subject so important? There is not necessarily anything more spiritual or godly about giving money to a church or any other cause than there is about paying bills, buying a new suit, sending children to college, or saving for retirement.

God may be equally pleased with us for using our money in any of these ways. What makes giving to a church or charity special is the aspect of *renunciation*. We take a portion of our money and we give it *away*. We give it away for *others* to use in what we hope will be a God-pleasing manner.

The spiritual principle of renunciation is important in the Bible and is clearly presented in the stories of Jesus. The Gospels consistently tell of Jesus calling his followers to renounce worldly goods and material possessions. Such directives may seem extreme but, certainly, Jesus calls all of his followers to deny themselves and to resist the temptation of storing up treasure on earth.

The basic point seems to be that we have a need to give. Stewardship, then, is not just about our meeting the needs of the poor, or the needs of our church, or the needs of any particular charity – it is about fulfilling our own need to give as well.

Mark Allen Powell, [Giving to God](#)

A NEXT STEP

The author of *Giving to God* lists 10 motives for giving:

1. To gain recognition
2. To attain power or influence
3. To appease God
4. To earn rewards
5. To fulfill obligations
6. To support a worthy cause
7. To divest unwanted assets
8. To give thanks
9. To express love for God
10. To convey the Christ within

As you consider these motives, which of these do you think has played the greatest part in moving you to give?

In Romans 15:27, Paul is speaking of the churches in Macedonia and Achaia and their sharing of resources on behalf of those in need. When he writes, "They were pleased to do this, and in deed they owe it to them."

In this case, giving was something that the Christians ought to do and something that they wanted to do. Giving is both a responsibility and a pleasure, a duty and a delight.

Do you know people who have moved from reasonable to radical and given their money in ways that go beyond what might be the usual expectation? Have you ever done this yourself?

Create a giving "bucket list" for you/your family. What are the big dreams of giving you are pursuing for this year or this life? Start small and let the joy of giving propel you toward bigger and bigger generosity goals.

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