

Bite Size Bible Study

The Art of Giving #110

By Pastor Lee

This month we will celebrate the best gift ever given - the birth of the one who was to become our Savior and High Priest as well as our Advocate. God the Father gave us this gift with full knowledge that His Son would be rejected and ridiculed by many in His generation. Not only would Jesus be killed, but He would die crucified on the cross. Yet even knowing this God wanted to give us this gift.

His desire when giving us his Son was that everyone would know, love and follow Him. It is not completely clear how He is going to accomplish this, but He says that He will and I believe Him. There are millions of people who never have a chance in this life to know Jesus, let alone have a personal relationship with Him. There are those who live and die in countries where Christianity is not taught. There are those who grow up in circumstances that make it impossible, in human terms, to have any kind of meaningful relationship with Him. And then there are the millions of children who are conceived and never allowed to be born.

As Jesus was about to leave His apostles, He gave them instructions as to what their prime directive was to be for the rest of their lives. These instructions were to be the underlying reason for everything they did for the rest of their physical lives, and they were to pass this objective to the ones to whom they would pass the baton when they died. That prime objective has become known as the "Great Commission."

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT)

And then he told them, *"Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere.* Mark 16:15 (NLT)

What were the disciples to do? 1) go and make other disciples, 2) baptize them, 3) teach them. And to whom should this be done? To everyone, everywhere. I think it is interesting that He never said we would be able to complete this mission, but the intent was to do as much as possible.

We, as caretakers of a portion of God's wealth, give "tithes and offerings" to accomplish this commission. We do this first because it honors Jesus showing we are in line with His priorities. All of the other things we do are secondary priorities. It is not that other things, like our welfare, and that of our families are not important, but His commission is the most important. A wise steward always prioritizes what is to be done and accomplishes the first things first.

How much should we give to others? Should it go to the church collection? Should some be used for other ministries? Should some be used in your own ministry for others? Should some be used for helping the poor people, or struggling families, or the schools, or the Red Cross and other caregivers? The answer is not the same for everyone. Your situation will be determined by your conversation with God and what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

Giving is an art. It is something we learn and perfect throughout our lives. Here are some of the giving habits that we should be developing:

Regular

We need to give on a regular periodic basis. It keeps us in constant contact with the commission we, together with Jesus, are fulfilling.

Personal

We need to take it personally because this is our part of the Great Commission, but we should not be prideful of our work or involvement.

Considered

We should consider at each juncture - why am I doing this, what do I expect it to accomplish, and is it what Jesus wants done at this time?

Planned

We need to plan ahead for unexpected and/or special events that will need funding, such as: helping the needy, mentoring someone, education such as retreats and conferences.

Prayerful

Our giving should always be accompanied by a substantial amount of prayer. Otherwise how are we going to know when, where and how much He wants us to provide? Unless we are in close contact with Him we cannot be sure we are in line with His priorities.

**Giving is not a ritual that we do every so often.
It's a source of great enjoyment, much planning and excitement.
Because we are really an active and essential part
of the work Jesus said was to be our prime directive.**

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