



## Ten good reasons to give:

Giving is...

1. An opportunity to experience joy. God is a giver. Anytime we imitate God and do the works that He does, e.g., share our faith, forgive another person who has sinned against us, pray for a sick person, or give financially, we are tapping into the very life and being of God. People who hoard never have an opportunity to experience God's life. Only givers can experience the joy of God.

2. An opportunity to show gratitude to God. God has blessed each one of us with a variety of blessings: material well-being, family, church, work, health, etc. How many other ways do we really have to say "thank you" to God other than to return to Him a portion of what He has given us? Simply stated, giving is an opportunity for us to say to God, "Thank you!"

3. An opportunity to participate in all the ministries of a large church. Churches are involved in a wide number of ministries that no one person could, by themselves, do or invest time in. For example, Vineyard gives a substantial amount of money each month to support church planting in St. Petersburg, Russia, to help with a campus fellowship group at Ohio State University, and to feed over 1500 people a month in the Short North area of Columbus. No one of us could do all this alone, but a person who gives here has an opportunity to participate in all the ministries of Vineyard.

4. An opportunity to practically acknowledge our view of life. Either the money that we control is ours, which is a secular world view, or all of our money belongs to God. True, only a portion of our time and only some of our money will be specifically designated for God and for His church, but all the rest ought to be dedicated to Him, used according to His will, and devoted to things that honor Him.

5. An opportunity to support what we believe in. One of the best ways for a person to support a cause that they believe in is to give money to that cause. Political organizations and various groups supporting certain rights (abortion rights, gay rights, freedom in the arts) certainly understand the importance of financing. Of course financial giving is not the only way to support something. Giving our time, praying for that cause, and supporting it with encouragement are all other valid ways to support a cause; but giving financially is certainly one major way to support what we believe in.

6. An opportunity to be free from financial anxiety. Many people are anxious about their financial futures because they haven't learned about the paradoxical nature of the Christian life. People who hold tightly to their money will be in bondage to financial concerns. People who open their hands freely in giving will experience emotional liberty in financial matters. Jesus was not a wealthy man, yet He was a man who had tremendous financial peace.

7. An opportunity to pay for services that we and our families receive. It is an extraordinary thing that many of us receive services such as counseling, training for our children, teaching, and opportunities to participate in ministry and yet allow others to pay for the services we receive. Someone is picking up the bill for the lights, heat, pastoral salaries, mortgage, and materials that we all enjoy. If you are able to financially give, and almost everyone in Vineyard is able to give, and you are not, then someone is paying the freight for you.

8. An opportunity to receive financial blessing from God. God challenges us to put Him to the test. He says in Malachi 3, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." In many ways, I am hesitant to call attention to this great and awesome promise of God for financial blessing, yet the truth of my own experience is this: I have never met a tither whom God has not provided for financially. This promise from the book of Malachi is one of those promises that God is very quick to fulfill. Tithing does produce financial blessing from God!

9. An opportunity to store up treasure in heaven. God takes note of everything we do in secret for Him such as our secret prayer, our secret fasting, or our secret giving (Mt. 6). Whether there is a huge payoff here on earth (the book of Malachi tells us there is an earthly payoff) there will certainly be a heavenly payoff for those who give financially toward the work of God's kingdom.

10. An opportunity to give beyond me and my own family. "Us four...no more", "God bless me...that's as far as I can see" is not what Christianity is about. If the only thing I pay for is my own children's Christian school, or things that directly bless me such as my own home furnishings, or my own family and my friends, then Jesus says I am no better than the Gentiles. Non-Christians pay for their own children's education and give generously to their friends and family besides. Christian giving is different because it involves sowing beyond ourselves and our own circle.

### **What are some Biblical illustrations regarding giving?**

Three threads run through the tapestry of the Bible's message concerning Christian giving: stewardship, first fruits and tithing.

1. Stewardship - A steward is someone who manages or administers the property or affairs of someone else as an agent. The message of the Old and New Testaments is that human beings act as stewards of God for all creation. For the

Christian, achievement is not measured by how much one makes or how much one has. The measure of a Christian is how well possessions have been used in Jesus' name and for what purpose.

2. First Fruits - The idea of first fruits challenges most of our current thoughts about giving. Giving is typically based on what we no longer need or what is unused after we have paid all the bills. The concept of first fruits is entirely different. Back in the Old Testament a person was to give the first fruits of their crop. Those first tomatoes of early summer always seem to be the best. We have waited for them and nurtured them during the slow warming of the spring. The Bible continually calls us to give the first of everything to God (Prov. 3:9). God expects people to give from the very best they have. It means the money we give the church comes out of the check first before obligations or savings are even considered.

3. Tithing - In an affluent society, we need some guidance for our thinking about giving. In Old Testament times the tithe was the king's portion. After a king conquered and subjugated the people, the people would render to him a tithe (a tenth of the produce of their land). Because Israel was conquered by God's love and care, Israel became obligated to render to the Lord a tithe. Tithes were used for several purposes: the maintenance and support for the priesthood (Num. 18:21-24); tithes were paid to the poor (Deut. 14:28-29); and a sacred tithe was given that would be associated with a fellowship meal (Deut. 14:22-27). In fact, when you calculate the Old Testament tithe requirements, the three tithes add up to about 28% of a person's income. This was on top of taxes imposed by the government and for the temple. But the basic rule was that "a tithe of everything...belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord" (Lev. 27:30-33).

## Is tithing legalistic?

Tithing existed before the law was given (see Gen. 14:18-21 regarding Abraham and Melchizedek) and the Christian church has historically followed the pattern of Abraham in recommending at least a tithe to our King of Righteousness and Peace. Moreover, since our righteousness "is to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees" (Mt. 5:20). Spirit-led church members will be led to give at least as much as the Pharisees. Remember this: it is not legalism to do what is difficult or a bit unnatural at first. It may be "natural" for a boyfriend and girlfriend to sleep together. But the Holy Spirit will lead them to a less "natural" but more holy way of relating. Similarly, financial giving may not be easy—but it is certainly what God intends. Tithing today is not a legalistic edict (that is, a wooden command without the heart attitude of giving). We in Vineyard believe, however, that tithing is a wonderful place to start a life pattern of giving in an affluent society.

## Should our giving go to the local church?

In his wonderful book on finances titled *A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions*, Gene Getz writes, "Every true believer is part of the universal church (1

Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:11-16). However, when we study the New Testament, we cannot bypass the concept of the local church. In fact, approximately 95% of all the references to the ekklesia (Greek for "church") are references to local, visible, and organized expressions of the universal church. Luke's historical record in the book of Acts is an account of founding local churches."

"We cannot bypass the concept of the local church when it comes to determining how Christians should use their material possessions. The principle becomes especially relevant as we attempt to practice the principle of accountability. Practically speaking, it is very difficult to hold Christian leaders accountable outside the local church structures unless these leaders themselves determine that they are going to be accountable to the Christian public at large by means of a careful and thorough system of reports and by setting up a responsible board of directors. Even then, it is a simple matter for Christian leaders and para-church organizations to still be able to waste money, mis-use funds, and misappropriate gifts that are given in response to requests for specific needs. In recent years, we have seen this illustrated dramatically and particularly by [some] tele-evangelists."

Vineyard Columbus would add to Gene Getz' well-stated admonitions regarding accountability in giving by encouraging people to think through the New Testament message regarding the local church. It is the local church and not another organization that is chiefly designed by God to be the agent of the kingdom of God in this world. Only the local church crosses generational lines, ministering not only to students, but to grandparents, babies, singles and marrieds. Only the local church carries on all of the functions of kingdom living including the worship of God, the teaching of God's Word, ministry to the poor, prayer for the sick, the burial of deceased loved ones, world missions, etc. Only the local church functions according to biblical patterns of church government. The local church alone is entrusted with the two biblical ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Table.

In sum, the local church is the chief focal point of God's plan for the ages (Eph. 3) and ought to be your focal point for giving. Vineyard Columbus, in no way, discourages people from giving to para-church organizations, to friends on the mission field or to individual's carrying on evangelistic work. In fact, many leaders in Vineyard Columbus give substantially to para-church organizations and to leaders outside the local church. But we believe that such giving ought to be above and beyond our substantial financial commitment to the local church, since the local church is God's chief agent for bringing the kingdom of God into this world.

**Where we stand in Vineyard Christian Fellowship: We do not want anyone to give out of a grudging or legalistic spirit. We believe all giv-**

**ing ought to be voluntary, joyful, and be seen as an opportunity and not a duty. In order to fulfill the biblical pattern and to express our commitment to God and our commitment to support what He is doing here, we ask members of the church to make a commitment to regular financial giving each month. We also ask leaders to tithe to the Vineyard (unless it is financially impossible).**

**Courtesy of:**

"Newcomers Manual" **VCF Columbus**, 6000 Cooper Rd Westerville, OH 43081

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