

## The economics of the kingdom of God

The last thing we talk about these days is money. People would rather talk about their sex lives than tell you about their finances.

As Christians, we have to exercise faith in every part of our lives and our finances are no exception.

"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields - and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life." **Mark 10**<sup>29-30</sup>

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written:

"He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. **2Corinthians 9**<sup>6-11</sup>

God assumes that when we gave ourselves to Him, we gave Him our whole selves, including our wallets and purses as well. It is sometimes said that our wallets are the last part of us to be saved!

It is part of our commitment to support the work of God's kingdom where we are and that includes financially, as the Holy Spirit leads.

### It's all his anyway

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else **Acts 17**<sup>24-25</sup>

The issue is not how much of our wealth we should give, but how much of His wealth God allows us to keep! In fact, keeping too much is described in **Malachi 3**<sup>8</sup> as robbing God

It's God's, to do with as He pleases. In His goodness, He usually lets us keep most of it!

### We need to give

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **Matthew 6**<sup>19-21</sup>

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "**Acts 20**<sup>35</sup>

### How should we give?

#### In faith

Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." **Mark 12**<sup>17</sup>

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on. **Mark 12**<sup>41-44</sup>

### **Cheerfully**

God loves a cheerful giver **2Corinthians 9**<sup>7</sup> (literally: a hilarious giver)

It is part of his nature. He wants us to be like him.

### **Secretly**

Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. **Matthew 6**<sup>1-4</sup>

### **Thoughtfully**

On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, **1Corinthians 16**<sup>2</sup>

Aim to give according to the amount of your income and plan what you are giving.

### **What should we give?**

In the Old Testament, people gave a 'tithe' (10%) to God's work and freewill offerings on top of that (**Leviticus 27**<sup>30</sup>). Some argue that in New Testament times we should give likewise. However, God wants you to be prepared to give everything in these New Testament days.

However, in the New Testament we are not driven by laws, but led by the Spirit (also you could argue they didn't have NI & PAYE to contend with in those days!). But the principle applies: we should give and 10% is a good figure to aim for - but the exact amount is for you and the Lord to decide. This necessitates prayer, openness and obedience. He may ask you to give more than 10% but God is no man's debtor, and He knows best.

Keep asking God 'Is there anyone else who you want me to give to?'

### **Summary**

The amount of money you give is between you and God. It is a matter of obedience

It is why you give and how you give that counts. It is a matter of faith.

If you give in faith what God has placed on your heart (a good heart) with generosity and cheerfully (like God himself) believing that he is good, you will prosper and you will receive back far more than you gave and what you give (like the five small loaves and two fish, he will multiply it and use it in his Kingdom to great effect.

On the other hand, no matter how much we give, if it is reluctant, stingy or lacking in faith we will not benefit and it will not be used in the Kingdom to the same effect. If we try to use money as a weapon to buy influence or withhold it out of self interest or bitterness, it will never benefit us or the Kingdom, in fact, like all sinful behaviour, it will corrupt our thinking and we will come to a place of humiliation.