

Stewardship Under the Cross

God's Word on How We Manage His Gifts

Everything we do in the Church and each of our own personal spiritual lives must be based on the Word of God alone. Therefore, as we here at St. Matthew Lutheran Church of Westfield prayerfully consider our stewardship of God's gifts, we must base that consideration on what the Bible says. Over the next couple of weeks, as Stewardship Consecration Sunday October 4 comes closer, please read over these Scriptures, think, and pray about what proportion of your income God is calling you to give to His work in the Church.

How Much Does God Love Me?

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.

God loves me more than I could ever know -so I know that what He says about stewardship is for my benefit.

To whom does my money belong?

Haggai 2:8 "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine," says the Lord Almighty."

1 Chr. 29:14 King David said to God, "But who am I, and who are my people, that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you have already given us!"

Psalms 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it...

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

What Does Jesus Say About our Stewardship of God's Gifts?

Luke 16:10-13 Jesus said, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?

And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. *You cannot serve both God and Money.*"

Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus said, "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."

With What Heart Should I Give My Tithes and Offerings?

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 "The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for *God loves a cheerful giver*. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work."

What Priority Should My Tithes and Offerings Have?

Proverbs 3:9-10 "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first part of everything your land produces. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with the finest wine."

How Often Should I Make my Tithes and Offerings?

1 Corinthians 16:2 "On the first day of every week, each of you should put aside some amount of money in relation to what you have earned and save it for this offering."

This tells me that the Lord wants me to make my money offerings to Him regularly, that is, whenever I have income, whether I am able to go to church that week or not.

How Should I Give to the Lord's Work?

1 Corinthians 16:2 "On every Lord's Day, each of you should put aside some amount of money in relation to what you have earned and save it for this offering."

Deut. 16:17 "Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you."

Mark 12:41-44 And Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "*Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.* For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

*The Lord tells me that it is not the dollar amount itself that is important. What is important is that I make my money offerings **proportionately**. In other words, I should give a generous percentage of the income the Lord enables me to earn through my work and investments.*

What Proportion of My Income Is God Calling Me to Give?

2 Corinthians 8:1-3, 7 "Now I want to tell you, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done for the churches in Macedonia. Though they have been going through much trouble and hard times, their wonderful joy and deep poverty have overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford but far more. And they did it of their own free will. . . . But just as you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us --see that you also excel in this grace of giving."

Luke 7:47 Jesus said, "I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so *she has shown me much love*. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love."

Malachi 3:8-10: "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse-- the whole nation of you-- because you are robbing me. 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." *So my money offerings to the Lord should also be made **generously**. In the Old Testament, this was set at a tithe (10%) - and in the New Testament Christians are urged to "excel in this grace of giving."*

Summary

*Recognizing that what I have is from my loving heavenly Father's hand, He is calling me to give: 1. **Willingly**, 2. **As my First Priority**, 3. **Regularly (whenever I have income)**, 4. **Proportionately (a percentage of my income)**, and 5. **Generously (Faithful Christian giving starts at a tithe)**.*