

LESSON 4

Creative Giving

AS A GIVER, THERE ARE CREATIVE WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE THAT REVEAL THE LEVEL OF OUR COMMITMENT AND THE DEPTH OF OUR INDIVIDUAL FAITH.

Many people, when challenged on the topic of giving toward our church's financial campaign, have the same reaction: "I've been a believer (or attended ABC Church) for 10 years and I know how to give." While that is probably true with respect to giving out of your income, most contributors have never been informed or challenged in the area of "creative giving." Poor money management aside, the biggest practical hurdle facing most givers is articulated as, "I would like to contribute, but there isn't much left over after the bills."

From tax-beneficial asset contributions, to numerous "why didn't I think of that" ideas, the possibilities for giving beyond your income are far-reaching and can be very impacting. Nurturing a creative giving mindset requires prayer and focus. It often prompts givers to think "outside the offering plate" about how they can support the specific vision set before them.



KEY CONCEPT: We can give assets.

Whereas income is generally set and can be difficult to divert in significant fashion, the idea of giving appreciated assets opens a whole new dimension to engaging our financial means in Kingdom work.

Determining how to give in this area requires prayer and planning. God will communicate to each heart that is willing. In fact, praying ahead of time about the possibility of taking action shows a heart that yearns to walk in concert with the leading of the Holy Spirit; not ahead, nor behind, but in step.¹

Due to the complicated nature of tax law and various legal processes, it is imperative that one enlist the right help when engaging in this important type of giving. Some of you will already be familiar with such matters and may have a lawyer on retainer for just such an occasion. For others, realize that your church leaders will rarely possess the knowledge and/or professional credential to walk down this road with you. Therefore, ask around! Get recommendations for tax lawyers, financial advisors, estate planners, and so on.



KEY CONCEPT: We can give possessions.

While some of us have assets, all of us have "stuff." The key in understanding this area of giving is to realize that something that (a) may have been worth a lot at some point in time or (b) you perceive to be of value may not actually be worth much today as a liquidated source of cash. For this reason, follow guidelines established by your church leaders regarding items that will be accepted as non-liquid contributions.

The Apostle John recounts how Mary of Bethany, sister of the recently resurrected Lazarus, relinquished a very expensive bottle of perfume in what Jesus recognized as an overt act of worship. Her decision to anoint her Savior² with something worth a year's wages reveals two important lessons.

LESSON 4

Creative Giving

First, that her behavior was not impulsive; rather, it evidenced a premeditated plan to give in a creative way that bestowed great honor and expressed thanksgiving to God. Second, others may see your act of worship as foolish or wasteful. Give anyway. Be lavish toward your Savior. Don't let fear of man, nor the reprisal of those not involved in your decision, hold you back from giving what God asks of you.



DISCUSSION: Make a list below of items that you own, that would be willing to pray about surrendering (music, technology, sports memorabilia, jewelry, and so on).



KEY CONCEPT: We can give sacrifices.

Picture, if you will, the end product of most Biblical sacrifices: a pile of ash! At its simplest, a sacrifice is offered fully and is not picked back up off the altar. The message is quite clear: your offering is about to be “consumed” by a holy God who knows the motivation behind the gift and who responds accordingly.³

Furthermore, true sacrifice comes at a cost. King David summed it up this way: “I will not sacrifice ... that which costs me nothing.”⁴ So the real question is not if we bring a sacrifice, but rather when we do, at what cost will it be to our comfort, convenience, or control? And what is the state of our heart in the process?

Our perceived “need” for – and if we’re honest, maybe even the “right” to – entertainment, comforts, delicacies, privileges, and so on, heavily influences our decision-making and our spending. Esteemed as they are, such items hold the potential to reign as idols in our lives. If it “can’t be lived without,” then it should be at the top of your list to be laid on the altar.

For most of us, a dramatic shift in this area means less clutter, less distraction, and less spending. It translates into fewer unhealthy, unholy demands on our time and resources – the majority of which are self-induced in the first place.



DISCUSSION:

a) How would your life look different if you boldly sacrificed a specific or routine purchase, habit, convenience, trip, activity, or agenda?

LESSON 4

Creative Giving

(b) What did you gain, when Christ sacrificed?



PERSONAL / HOUSEHOLD APPLICATION

DISCUSS

How do you define giving? How have you challenged yourself beyond giving money?

DECIDE

Re-evaluate your hold on material things, as well as the priorities that consume your time and money. Purpose to move forward in humility in faith, in a new direction.

DO!

Establish an “altar” in your heart upon which you are willing to lay anything that may come before your God and His priorities. Be proactive in prayer and then follow through, by faith not works, on the things God asks you to do and to give, for His use and to His glory.

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- 1 Gal 5:25
 - 2 John 12:1-8
 - 3 Gen 4:3-7
 - 4 2 Sam 24:24