

GIVING

There has been a lot of confusion about Christian giving. For those of us who have a background in a well-established tradition, it is refreshing to look simply at the New Testament guidelines concerning giving. For the rest of us, where better to look, anyway?

1. Inside the local church

Acts 2:44 - 47.

An early result of faith. Believers were TOGETHER and recognised that their belongings were for the common good. Living 'in community' is not for all believers, but the same attitude certainly IS. It flowed out from what God had done and was doing in their lives.

Acts 4:32 - 35.

Very much the same story. What caused it? '...much grace was upon them all' (**v.33**). Their giving was an expression of:

- a) the work of God in their lives
- b) their 'togetherness' and appreciation of each other
- c) their trust in their leaders

2. Beyond the local church

You will find **2 Corinthians chapters 8 & 9** very helpful; try reading them through on your own. For the moment, though, look at **2 Cor. 8: 1 - 5**. Once again it is the grace of God which was the starting point. Their joy overflowed their extreme poverty and expressed itself in rich generosity. When they heard of a need they urgently wanted to help. It was not just a reflex response to throw some money at a problem, either! Paul was surprised and delighted to see that their financial giving followed on from the fact that they gave themselves to God first and then to the apostles. The believers gave up to and BEYOND their ability!

3. The 'HOW' of giving

It is fairly obvious that most if not all of the giving in these passages was done as a church. Each one's contribution to that church giving was his own personal concern. Here are some guidelines from **2 Cor. 9: 7** :-

- a) It was each one's individual responsibility.
- b) It needed a decision, an established plan.
- c) There was to be no pressure.
- d) It was to be a joyful act.

Personally, we find it useful to divide our giving into two parts:-

'Baseline giving'...the regular amount which we have decided to give...handled by Bank Standing Order and covenanted.

'Response giving'...leaving us free to respond to other needs as they turn up.

4. The results of giving

See **2 Corinthians 9: 6 - 15**.

- a) Real benefits to the giver. (**v.6**). See also **Acts 20:35** and **Luke 6:38**. It is actually more enjoyable to give than to receive.
- b) All our needs provided and enough to overflow to give. (**v.11**) Made rich in every way, not for riches' own sake, but so that we can be generous again and again!
- c) Meeting the needs. (**v.12**) The obvious and important result.
- d) Overflow in thanks and glory to God. (**v.12**).
- e) Links strengthened between giver and receiver. (**v.14**).

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