

From the Heart

theology of financial faithfulness



**"You must each decide in your heart how much to give.
And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure.
For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."**

- 2 Corinthians 9:7

Our culture teaches three myths about giving...

Myth 1: Giving is about gaining. Our culture promotes an attitude of selfishness. As a result, we learn: "Give in order to get. Give if it feels good. Give if it results in acceptance, position, or influence. Give as a tax benefit."

Myth 2 : Giving is about excess. Our culture promotes an attitude of scarcity. Therefore we hoard. As a result, we learn to give only if there is anything leftover, which rarely happens.

Myth 3 : Giving is about duty. Our culture promotes an attitude of guilt. As a result, we learn to give as a token gesture rather than cheerfully, generously, and from our heart.

Truth: In contrast to these myths, the Bible characterizes the God-honoring giver as one who has a Christ-like attitude. The generous giver is one who gives with an attitude of obedience, humility, and joy. **Giving is a grateful response to new life and salvation in Jesus Christ.** As a result, giving is about who we are and who we are becoming.

Why do we talk about money?

Money has significant influence in our lives. Left to our own devices, it can become a source of frustration, pain, and bondage. God wants to protect us from these pitfalls. He wants to show us the freedom that comes from understanding and handling money as a means to glorify Him. That's why more than two thousand Scripture passages touch on the theme of money.

In fact, about two thirds of Jesus' parables address the appropriate way to steward our financial resources. At Grace, we talk openly and honestly about money because it is a crucial aspect of discipleship, ministry, and spiritual growth.

"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

- Luke 12:15

Why should I give?

God created us to be channels of His provision, not reservoirs. A body of water without an outlet becomes stagnant. A life without an outlet for some of its resources also becomes stagnant. Giving is a channel for God's heart to flow through us—a heart of love, generosity, and compassion. When we give, we experience satisfaction because we become more of who God wants us to be—like Him.

1. Giving is a grateful response to God's goodness.

James 1:17 says: "Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above." Our giving is simply a way to acknowledge God as our provider and to say: "Thank you, Lord. I appreciate your generosity in my life, and I too want to be generous."

2. Giving is an outward sign of our inward commitment to God and His purposes.

In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus says: "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where they can be eaten by moths and get rusty, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth-eaten or rusty and where they will be safe from thieves. Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be." Our Lord teaches us not to base our identity and security on temporal, material things that we won't take to Heaven, but to invest ourselves and our treasure in things that make an eternal difference. When our treasure is with God, our heart is also with Him.

3. Giving is a way to bless others and to be blessed.

The relationship between giving and blessing goes all the way back to God's covenant with Abraham. In Genesis 12:2-3, God tells Abraham that he is being blessed so that he can be a blessing to others. This relationship weaves all the way through the New Testament. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35), and we do reap what we sow (Luke 19:11-27). We miss the joy and blessing in our own lives when we hold on to what we have with clenched fists rather than sharing freely with others from an open, generous heart.

4. Giving breaks the hold money can otherwise have on us.

Money is a very powerful thing. When money becomes an idol or a stronghold, it captures our hearts, receives our allegiance, and controls our lives. When money becomes a means to glorify God, it leads to generosity, blessing, and freedom. John Wesley said: "When I have money I get rid of it as quickly as possible, lest it find a way into my heart." Giving to the work of God not only brings joy, it keeps us free from the constricting grip of materialism, which destroys so many relationships and ruins so many lives.

How should I give?

All giving should be done with the right attitude. We should not give in order to receive, impress, or because of what we think might happen if we don't. Instead, **we are called to give generously as an act of worship in joyful response for all the Lord has lavished upon us through Jesus Christ.** God loves it when we give generously and from the heart.

Where should I start?

The act of giving from your heart is more important than how much you actually give. In Jesus' day, a devout Jew would give by the tithe, a tenth of his income (Malachi 3:10; Numbers 18:24-29). Zacchaeus, the despised tax collector transformed by Christ's love and grace, gave away half of what he owned (Luke 19:8). A widow at the temple gave "all she had to live on" (Mark 12:44). All three gave from their heart—as an act of worship and thanksgiving.

When we listen to our hearts, which have been transformed by Christ's life and death, we find ourselves becoming more eternally focused, humbly sacrificial, and radically generous. Suddenly, it becomes not so much a matter of how much we give away, but how much we need to keep.

Reflection:

What do the Scriptures mentioned in this booklet tell you about ...

The character of God? What is God like?

Who does God create us to be? How do we bring Him glory?

How does sin around the issue of money corrupt our God-given identity?

(For example: the love of money, the fear of provision, past pain, an independent spirit)

How does Jesus set us free from the grip money can otherwise have a hold on us?

How can we live in grateful response to God with the resources He has entrusted to us?

What is the goal?

The goal is a heart set free from the love of money. This is the first step toward financial peace and becoming generous stewards of God's provision. The tithe is not a "check box," but the God-given benchmark to set and surpass.

The tithe is defined by 10% of our income.

In the Old Testament, God directed His people to give 10% of their income to His purposes. The Lord instructed them: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house" (Malachi 3:10; see also Leviticus 27:30, Deuteronomy 14:24, and 2 Chronicles 31:5).

The storehouse was a physical place where the Jews delivered their offerings of grain and animals. The keepers of the storehouse, the Levites, in turn used these resources as revenue to care for themselves, widows, needy foreigners in the area, and orphans.

Consistent with His declaration that He did not come to abolish the requirements of the Law (Matthew 5:17-19), Jesus affirmed the tithe. In parallel passages in the Gospels (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42), Jesus told the Pharisees not to neglect their practice of tithing.

In the early church, people no longer brought their tithes and offerings to a physical storehouse or the temple. Instead, they brought their tithes and offerings to the local fellowship of believers. Twice the Scripture records they gave all their possessions (Acts 2:44, 4:34), this included more than the obligation of the tithe (10%) in the Old Testament. The apostles used these resources for the spreading of the Gospel, general and administrative support of the church, and to care for the poor, widows, orphans, and needy (Acts 4:32-37). Most who argue against tithing want to do less, whereas the early church did more.

We see other examples of giving in the early church. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul praised the Macedonian churches for the "wealth of generosity" that overflowed out of their "extreme poverty." Paul urged the believers in Corinth and Galatia to give consistently by setting an amount aside for their local church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). We also see money sent to the elders in Jerusalem (Acts 11:29-30).

**God's Word teaches we should give particularly to the local church.
Considering this is your church home (with its own set of needs),
and this is your spiritual family (which benefits you in many ways),
starting with a tithe to Grace is a good idea.
After that you can give more to Grace and more elsewhere.**

What if I can't tithe right now?

Giving 10% does not always happen immediately, especially for new believers. In most cases, believers work diligently over time to re-prioritize their budgets to reflect their Kingdom values. God blesses some believers with the ability to give more than a tithe.

What matters is that you contribute according to the ability you have been given, from your heart, in joyful response to God. Tithing is a benchmark, not a check box. It is a goal to set and surpass.

How do I give to the work of God through Grace?

We encourage every believer to give to God's work in one or more of three ways: promises, offerings, and gifts.

A **promise** is an ongoing commitment to give a certain amount of income each week or month. Setting a fixed amount in your personal budget for giving to the church is often the best way to contribute to the work of God. We encourage the biblical standard of the tithe (10% of our income to the local church) as a goal to set and surpass.

An **offering** is also given on a monthly or weekly basis, but might change in amount from week to week or month to month. Offerings are given by those whose income is irregular or by those who do not yet feel able to make a promise. Offerings can also be gifts above and beyond the tithe for special purposes.

A **gift** is a special one-time contribution. This may come from an unexpected blessing in income, such as a bonus or the sale of a resource or an investment.

Why participate as a financial partner?

Financial partnership is an act of worship and biblical mark of discipleship. Your financial participation is an outward expression of a deeper spiritual commitment, and an indication of a willing and obedient heart to join God and His purposes with the resources He has entrusted to your stewardship.

**Please pray and give cheerfully
what God places upon your heart to give.**

Scripture teaches that God's primary way of providing for the needs of the local church is through the people of God.

You are an integral part of that provision.

Investing your God-given resources in and through Grace is not only an act of worship and discipleship – it is a significant contribution to the fruitfulness of the Gospel ministry we share together.

Thank you for your participation in funding the Gospel and making a positive difference by extending the Kingdom of God through Grace. Your financial investment is a blessing to so many now and forever!

2018 PROMISE CARD

NAME _____ DATE _____
ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

YES! As an act of worship and discipleship, I desire to make a financial contribution for the ministry of the Gospel in and through Grace Northridge San Antonio.

I commit a promise of _____ per month to the work of God at Grace.

I would like to give a one-time gift of \$5,000 \$10,000 \$50,000 other

I would like to make a gift of securities; please contact me about a brokerage transfer.

Please bring this Promise Card to the Worship Gathering and drop it in the offering basket or mail to: PO Box 6494, San Antonio, Tx 78209

