

Stewardship at Mountain View Community Church

Giving of Possessions

1. Scriptural Patterns for Giving

a. Old Testament

Under the Law of Moses (from the time of Moses to Jesus), the Jews were commanded by God to give a tenth of their grain from the soil, a tenth of their fruit from the leaves, and every tenth animal of the herd and flock (Leviticus 27:30-33). These tithes (tenths) were given to the central sanctuary in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 14:22-26). In the temple area in Jerusalem there was a storage area set aside to reserve all the grain and so on from the tithes of the people. These tithes were for the Levites (Numbers 18:21-32) who were the “pastoral leaders” of Israel and who were not given an allotment of land.

Taken together these primary passages on tithing (Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:21-32; and Deuteronomy 14:22-29) suggest the following: (1) Annually, a tenth of all Israelite produce was to be taken to the city of the central sanctuary for distribution to the Levites, (2) At that time, at an initial festival, all Israelites ate part of the tithe, (3) The rest, which would be by far the major part of it, belonged to the Levites, (4) Every third year the tithe was gathered in the towns and stored for distribution to the Levites and the less fortunate: aliens, fatherless and widows (see Deuteronomy 26:12), and (5) The Levites were to present to the Lord a tenth of their tithe¹.

b. New Testament

Is Old Testament tithing a command for today? We do not believe it is. Believers today are not under the Law of Moses and are not required to observe the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8-11), Sabbath Year (Leviticus 25:1-7), or Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-12) as Old Testament Jews did.

The New Testament does not specify the minimum percentage that one must give. Nevertheless, it would be wise to consider the words of Bible teacher Dr. John MacArthur who says, “I can’t tell you how much to give, but if the law required a 10% minimum, I would think that barely scratches the beginning of what grace deserves.” In Jesus’ teaching on the Sermon on the Mount, he challenged people to go beyond what the law required in many areas of life.² So, it is reasonable to believe He may want us to give above and beyond what the O.T. Law required.

The New Testament does provide a pattern for giving, including how to give:

- Quietly and humbly (Matthew 6:2-4)
- Generously (Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:6-8)

And why to give:

- To store up treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21)
- To honor God and please Him (1 Cor. 9:7,11-13)
- To excel at the grace of giving (2 Cor. 8:7)

¹ Footnote from The NIV Study Bible, Deuteronomy 14:22-29.

² In particular, see Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32 and 38-39.

These passages focus on the heart, rather than on the law. Giving is to be done cheerfully and is to be rooted in a thankful heart because of the grace that was shown to us in Christ.

2. Giving at Mountain View

a. Challenge for MVCC

At Mountain View we want to avoid two errors: (1) teaching that the 10% tithe is mandated under the New Covenant, and (2) failing to challenge people in specific ways to give generously. We realize that some believers at MVCC are already giving 10% and others could not even conceive of giving that much. Our desire is to challenge believers to pray about what they are currently giving and ask God to show them how they can become more obedient to God's leading in this area of their lives.

Specifically, we want to challenge everyone at MVCC to examine their current level of giving and, out of devotion and obedience to God as well as love for God's kingdom to be extended, to choose to (1) adjust their giving immediately, or (2) decide where they want to be in 1-3 years. For some, this may mean working toward a "tithe" within three years, and for others this may mean giving above a "tithe" if that is what they are currently doing. For others they may be right where God wants them to be.

At MVCC we want to exhort believers to adopt a "wartime lifestyle"³. This is a lifestyle that acknowledges we are living in a time of spiritual battle where the souls of men and women, and boys and girls are at stake. Jesus calls us to deny ourselves (Mark 8:34-35; 10:29-30) for His sake and for the sake of the gospel. Thus, in making any kind of financial sacrifice for him we are denying a lesser good for a greater good. Truly, giving to the Lord's work is the greatest investment we can make, because it is an eternal investment (Matthew 6:19-21).

b. Accountability of Leaders and Members

1) Leaders:

We expect every church leader (e.g. pastor, elder, paid staff, deacon or deaconess, ministry team leader, home group leader) to be involved in an accountability relationship with another church leader (of the same sex). In this type of relationship, leaders will be held accountable in various areas (e.g. spiritual life, personal life, marriage and family life, and financial dealings). It is in this context that leaders will be asked about their giving to the Lord's work. This will serve as an encouragement and exhortation to be a good steward of one's possessions and to give generously to the Lord's work. This should not, however, be done in a legalistic way that will result in leaders feeling the need to give under compulsion (2 Corinthians 9:7).

2) Members and Regular Attendees:

We will encourage everyone (e.g. members and regular attendees) to be involved in an accountability relationship with another person (of the same

³ John Piper, The Dangerous Duty of Delight, p. 73

sex) where items such as spiritual life, personal life, marriage, family life, finances and giving can be discussed.

c. Teaching and Training

1) Preaching:

The pastors will preach on giving as the Lord leads. There will be at least one to two sermons about giving per year.

2) Community Groups:

The Good Sense Budget Course, or a similar course will be taught on a regular basis in Community Groups. It will also be available for use in Home Groups.

3) Home Groups:

The course written by MVCC, Using Your Money to Advance God's Kingdom, will be taught in home groups and other group settings. This curriculum is used in conjunction with Randy Alcorn's book, The Treasure Principle.

4) Seminars

We aim to teach a financial seminar at least once a year.

5) Personal Discipleship:

Believers will be encouraged and challenged by their leaders (home group leaders/ mentors/coaches etc.) to implement what they have been taught.

6) Financial Counseling

Our desire in the near future is to train financial counselors who can provide personal counsel to those who need help.

7) Student and Children's Ministry:

Stewardship will be taught to our youth and children in various venues.

d. Stewardship Campaigns

We believe that stewardship campaigns are biblical (1 Chronicles 28-29), appropriate, and needed on occasion. Our desire is to implement these campaigns only when there is a need to raise a large amount of funds for a major project or ministry.

e. Fundraising- Please see the August 29, 2002, position paper, "Fundraising Philosophy @ MVCC," written by the elders.

f. Borrowing

We believe it is wise to pay cash as often as possible. The Bible, however, does not prohibit the borrowing of money⁴. At Mountain View we will borrow money, if needed, to pay for items such as land and facility. We will also seek to pay off our debts in a timely fashion.

⁴ Romans 13:8 ("let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another") is sometimes used to say that a Christian or a Christian organization should never take out a loan. Paul's point however is that we are to have no unpaid debts; his point is not that we are never be in debt to anyone. Comparing Romans 13:8 to other Scriptures, this command cannot be taken to mean that we may never incur financial obligations, that we may not borrow from others in case of need (cf. Exodus 22:25; Psalm 37:26; Matthew 5:42; Luke 6:35). But it does condemn the looseness with which we contract debts and particularly the indifference so often displayed in the discharging of them (Psalm 37:21). Few things bring greater reproach upon the Christian profession than the accumulation of debts and refusal to pay them. (John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans, pp. 158-159)

g. Saving

Just as it is wise for families and individuals to save (Proverbs 21:20; 30:24-25), it is also wise for churches to save. Since MVCC was founded, we have budgeted 10% of our income for savings. Our desire is to continue to do this on a regular basis. Our purpose in budgeting for savings is to use this money toward (1) paying off loans on property and facilities, (2) saving money to use for maintenance of property or facilities, (3) saving for a “rainy” day, (4) saving for unexpected ministry that we feel called to pursue, and (5) saving for emergencies. Exceptions (a small percentage increase or decrease) will be allowed on a year-to-year basis, if deemed necessary.

The Elders of Mountain View Community Church
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