



**Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

2 Corinthians 9.7

Thank you to everyone who has given generously and cheerfully to Arden Marches churches in the last year. Your gifts have enabled our buildings to stay open and widely used (Coronavirus lockdown notwithstanding!) and much more importantly, for our ministry to reach many people, whether regular members of the church or in the community more widely.

To follow up on today's service (7<sup>th</sup> June 2020), you might like to spend some time considering the following questions. If you feel freed, encouraged, spurred on to do something or convicted (challenged) – that may well be of God. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what to do next. If you feel condemnation, then rest assured, that is NOT of God. Reject the condemnation and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how much the Father loves you before moving on to thinking about how to respond to that love.

### Why do we give to the church?

1) Re-read today's bible passage (Matthew 28:18-end):

*<sup>16</sup>Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."<sup>1</sup>*

- What does Jesus' Great Commission mean for you?
- Spend a few minutes dreaming what it would look like if we went around actively making disciples and teaching one another the ways of Jesus in our communities and further afield.

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<sup>1</sup> Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011

## Our relationship to money

2) Eugene Peterson says this:

*“One of the bad habits we pick up early in our lives is separating things and people into secular and sacred. We assume the secular is what we are more or less in charge of: our jobs, our time, our entertainment, our government, our social relations. The sacred is what God is in charge of: worship and the Bible, heaven and hell, church and prayers. WE then contrive to set aside a sacred place for God, designed, we say, to honour God but really intended to keep God in his place, leaving us free to have the final say about everything else that goes on. Prophets will have none of this. They contend that everything, absolutely everything, takes place on sacred ground.”<sup>2</sup>*

- Do you recognise this habit in your life?
- What would it mean to treat everything as being in the ‘sacred’ zone, putting everything at God’s disposal and used for his purposes? If the Great Commission applied to every moment, fibre and penny of your life?
- Why not draw up a table with two columns, ‘Sacred’ and ‘Secular’ and carry out an honest audit – a conversation between just you and God. Which column would you put the following things in: job; family; TV watching; hobbies (list them separately); vote; inner thoughts; choice of clothing; car; holidays; social media use; housework; grocery shopping; favourite possessions; exercise; salary/pay packet; any benefits or tax credits; spare time; pension; savings; education; ...
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what it might look like to move just one of these from the ‘Secular’ to the ‘Sacred’ column.

3) Which of the following factors and beliefs might be influencing your relationship to money and your generosity in giving?

- Attitudes to money in my family growing up
- My spouse/partner’s views and expectations
- Financial shocks (unexpected losses or gains)
- Problem gambling or spending at some point in my life
- Living with uncertainty
- Confidence with numbers
- Preferences for planning vs being spontaneous
- Gratefulness vs entitlement
- Debt / obligations
- Amount of savings or financial cushion
- Belief that God cares for me, does not want me to live in poverty, and wants me to enjoy the world He has created
- Belief that God provides and that his resources are unlimited

If you’d like to explore the area of God as provider, have a read of:

Matthew 6:26 , Matthew 7:7 , Matthew 7:11 , Luke 12:24

2 Corinthians 9:8 , Ephesians 3:20 , Philippians 4:6-7 , Philippians 4:19 , Hebrews 13:5 James 1:17, Psalm 23:1-6

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<sup>2</sup> When Kingfishers Catch Fire. Eugene Peterson. ISBN 978-1-473-65721-2, page 117.

## Practical aspects of giving

- 4) Keith Tondeur suggests 5 P's for our giving<sup>3</sup> :
- i. Periodic (e.g. on the first day of every week or month)
  - ii. Personal (everyone does it, all ages and life stages)
  - iii. Priority (the *first* thing we do with our money when we get it)
  - iv. Premeditated (planned and in keeping with our income)
  - v. Private (to honour God and not ourselves)
- Is there one of these areas that could benefit from revisiting, or a bit of a brush-up?
- 5) "God isn't so interested in what we give as much as what we hold back".
- What do you think of this statement?

The biblical model of giving is a tithe (10%) of our income. This is Old Testament law, and while we are under grace, not law, Jesus explicitly both continues and extends the reach of the law (See Matthew chapters 5 and 6). It seems that this is a good minimum for most people to work towards, though whether this is specifically given to the local church, or shared between the local church and wider ministries is for each one to work out, prayerfully.

For some, this would be too much, particularly if there are unmanaged debts to be paid off. For others, it would be too small and legalistic an amount to be limited to. Some people set themselves the target of increasing their giving by one percentage point each year.

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<sup>3</sup> Your Money and Your Life, Keith Tondeur. ISBN 0-281-04943-2. page 92

## For Children and young people

Here are some suggestions for discussions and activities with children:

- Have some mealtime-discussions about money, to ensure your children understand how money is earned, budgeted and spent in your household. Go further, by giving them some responsibility, or at least input into the decision-making.
- Decorate three jars for children to put pocket money and birthday money into. Label them 'giving', 'saving' and 'treats' and have a discussion about how much money they want to give away and save – maybe 20%, 40%, 40%. Then when they have something they want to support, there is some money already ready.
- Agree on a charity they would like to support for a year (an aid charity, toilet twinning, environmental charity, sponsoring a child,...). You could offer to match their contribution as an incentive to give away more.
- Set aside an amount of money to give away as a family and let them choose what cause to give to.
- Pray together for the things you give money to: thank God that you have enough to give away, and ask Him to ensure that it is well spent and makes a difference to bless others.
- Set some savings goals for things they would like to buy. Maybe create a 'totaliser' or a saving plan.
- Discuss your money values with them and have conversations about needs vs wants. If they are old enough to have an Amazon wish list (or they write a birthday/Christmas wishlist), why not go through it reviewing, for example, the environmental impact of products, the lasting value of an item, or whether they would rather wait for something even better. A good guide to buying anything is to ask 'in what way will the World be a better place if I have this?'
- You could also consider in what way their wish lists could have direct benefit on other people. For example, something to share. Or in post-Covid times, perhaps swapping a 'thing' for an 'experience' that supports small businesses and creates employment.

## Further reading, resources and advice

### Books

- *Your Money and your Life*. Keith Tondeur, SPCK – resources to accompany the book available free at <https://www.stewardship.org.uk/resources/your-money-and-your-life>
- *Nevertheless*. John Kirkby, available for free at <https://capuk.org/about-us/the-cap-story>

### Organisations and links

- Christians Against Poverty <https://capuk.org/>
- Credit Action <https://creditation.co.uk/>
- Stewardship <https://www.stewardship.org.uk/>