

## GIVING BACK TO GOD

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

I want to talk today about one of those unpopular subjects of our age: giving. Unpopular in the sense that I have not heard a sermon on the topic of Giving from the time I started coming here to Golden Gate Church of Christ. I felt that now is the right time to bring this message to the church as a reminder of what God expects of us in the area of our sowing, or giving, to His Kingdom. Do we know that Jesus talked about money more than he talked about Heaven? In Matthew, Mark, and Luke: 1 out of every 6 verses deals with money. Bible Trivia: Did you know, of the 29 parables Christ told, 16 deals with a person and his money?

How many of us want a bountiful harvest in our home (?) ... in our marriage (?) ... in our income (?) ... in our job (?) ... in all of our business affairs (?) ... in all that we do?! I'm sure that all of us would say *AMEN* to those questions. Who would not want God's richest blessings in every area of our lives?

Too often, we as Christians, become lax in our obedience to the commandment of God to give to Him what is rightfully His in the first place. We don't like to hear this type of message because, for the vast majority of Christians who go to our churches, their attitude toward giving to God is that they will only give to Him what is extra or what we might consider "leftovers" after we have used up as much as we need first. How many of us like to eat "leftovers"? We often find mold on the leftovers because they stay long in the refrigerator. Why does mold grow on the leftovers? Generally, most of us don't like to eat leftovers. If we don't like leftovers, I don't think we should expect God to like them either! God expects our best and only our best.

Proverbs 3:9-10 says: "*Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*"

What are those "first fruits"? In farming, these are the best fruits that we get from the harvest. It's the same with our time, our finances, and everything else that God blesses us with.

If we are to receive God's blessing then we must obey God's law first of all. God has given us so many great promises concerning the sowing and reaping of our increase into His Kingdom. One such passage in the Bible is found in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11: "*But this I say, He which sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; and always having all sufficiency in all things, may have abundance for every good work.*"

In this context, I would like to share with you the Five P's of Giving:

### First P: Giving should be our **Priority**

Priority is defined as something that is high in rank, time or place. It's something that we do or think first. Giving is a manifestation of love. When we give a gift to a friend, it would take us days and days of thinking what to buy in order to please that friend. And when we are in the

store, we still deliberate what to give as to color, brand, and many other things to consider. Then we think of how to wrap that gift. We are willing to take the pains of thinking what to give to that friend because we love him.

Matthew 22:37 says: *“You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul and will all your mind.”* Are we giving much attention to our gift to God, as much as the attention we give to our gift to a friend? Giving should not be a last minute decision. It’s not even what we take out from our wallet when the offering plate is passed. It’s something that we really plan days ahead. It is a decision to make. It is reflective of our love to God.

### Second P: Give out of your **Poverty**

Luke 21:1-4 says: *“As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ‘I tell you the truth,’ he said, ‘this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”*

People who give sacrificially know where their money comes from. They work hard for what they take home, but they also know that God will bless them and provide for their needs.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:8: *“Freely you have received, freely give”*. It doesn’t mean that we will literally give away all we have. It means that we must recognize in God’s complete and unconditional ownership of all that we possess. The more we seek the things of the Spirit, the less material things mean to us. We still use them and enjoy them, but we must recognize *WHO* has given them to us. We understand that we do not own them. We are merely stewards of all that we have, and we keep a loose grip on them.

### Third P: Give **Politely**

Matthew 6:1-4 says: *“Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in Heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

You don’t need to tell everyone what the amount of your gift is. It is a private matter. It’s between you and God.

### Fourth P: Give **Plentifully**

Luke 6:38 says: *“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

A few Sundays back, the Church members convened as a group in a Church Compass Meeting to decide on our monthly budget for 2012. Some of money goes to pay the minister, and some of it

goes to missions. Some of it goes for building maintenance, and some goes to charity. Every dollar that we give goes to an area of ministry. Ministry costs money, and the more generous we are, the more ministries we can do. The church that does ministry will always have expenses, and those expenses are going to keep growing.

If the Church is going to be effective, it must take measurable progressive steps forward. These steps cannot be done by James, our Minister, alone. But rather they must be done by us together as a group. When we arranged the pews a few months back, two individuals could not carry the load of one pew alone. But when all of the men carried together, we were able to arrange them in way that you see it now.

### Fifth P: Give **Purposefully**

Matthew 6:19-24 says: "*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

*"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

*"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

In other words we should give to a Heavenly cause. The Church is God's Heavenly cause here and now. So when you give here you are investing on the future of this Church - which is God's Church. We are also investing in our treasure in Heaven.

Going back to our scripture reading, in a nut shell, the Macedonians gave despite their poverty, despite the famine they were experiencing. They gave with liberality and in their abundance. And last, they gave for the ministering of the saints - prayerfully.

Finally, giving is an important aspect of our worship to God. We cannot love without giving. We give gifts to our parents, spouse, children, and friends because we love them.

John 3:16 says: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. That whoever believes, shall not perish but have everlasting life.*"

It is very clear that because of God's love for us, He gave His only Son. I would like to emphasize a point here: God didn't give us His second best; He didn't give us a second class gift. But He gave us the best gift that anyone could ever receive: His only Son.

Let me leave this question for us to think about, if we really love God, what are we giving back to Him? Is it our first fruits, or our leftovers?