

## CHARITABLE GIVING

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### Introduction

Charitable giving may be defined as the willingness and decision to give money and other resources directly or doing so through organizations for worthy causes. Charitable giving is the kind act of making donations for the benefit of the underprivileged or for other worthy causes.

Generally, charitable giving could be secular or religious in nature. Secular charitable giving may include giving for the benefit of persons or causes without religious motivations. In some parts of the world, there are registered foundations/organizations which either give or receive money and other resources for this kind of purposes

Religious charitable giving may be considered as the commitment to cheerfully give money or other resources beyond the regular tithes and offerings for a religious or other worthy cause(s). This kind of giving could be considered as part of a Christian's response of gratitude to the unsurpassed sacrifice of God to save humanity by supporting worthy causes through his/her resources.

### Approaches or Types of Charitable Giving<sup>1</sup>

Charitable giving could either be unplanned or planned.

#### Unplanned Charitable Giving

Unplanned charitable giving, which could also be called spontaneous, intuitive, or impulsive charitable giving. This type of Charitable giving is when people respond to an immediate request (s) for help or appeal for some worthy causes in the church or elsewhere. One could do so by making instant donations or commitment/pledge to redeem/fulfil at a later date. This category of charitable giving may also include making spontaneous donations to indigent people on the streets or to a charity organization. This charitable giving pattern may be influenced by (i) the effect of such appeal on the donor; (ii) sympathy to the cause or public expectations; and (iii) pressure rather than a deep conviction by the giver. In most cases, unplanned charitable giving is made once and could affect the quality of giving and possibly the faithfulness/sincerity of a giver.

#### Planned Charitable Giving

Planned or deliberative charitable giving refers to the actions plans and commitment on how much, what, where and when a person or family may donate to support worthy causes. Planned charitable giving seems (i) more purposeful; (ii) predetermined and (iii) may not necessarily depend on the appeal of the moment. Although, planned charitable could arise from a donor

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<sup>1</sup> See Hajdi Moche, Tom Gordon-Hecker, Tehila Kogut and Daniel Västfjäll, "Thinking, good and bad? Deliberative thinking and the singularity effect in charitable giving," *Judgment and Decision Making*, Vol. 17, No. 1, January (2022): 14–30

being made aware of needs, it is a preferred method and more likely sustainable. It helps the giver to make well-thought-out donation decisions and commitment to support a cause.

### **Biblical Foundations of Charitable Giving**

The term “charitable giving” does not appear in the Bible. However, there are abundant references or exhortations about giving and works of charity. These references to giving and works of charity are in various contexts. For example, (i) God’s direction to the Jews on how to deal with their fellow indigent Israelites as He leads them to settle in Canaan (Deut 15:7-11; 26:12, 13); (ii) His instructions on what constitutes appropriate fasting (Isa 58:6-7), and (iii) Christ’s eschatological pronouncement on caring for various categories of vulnerable persons as a Christian duty (Matt 25:34-46). Others are (iv) Paul’s counsel on giving to the churches in Ephesus (Acts 20:35) and Rome (Rom 12:13) and (v) Apostle John’s exhortation to his audience where he exhorts those who are endowed with the “world’s goods” not to overlook the needs of those who are less-privileged (1 John 3:17). These NT passages imply that charitable giving is (a) required of believers; (b) an act of worship; (c) an expression of love; (d) is rewarding, and (e) has eschatological dimensions.

### **Biblical Examples of Charitable Giving**

The New Testament has some specific examples of charitable giving in the Gospels, Acts and Pauline Epistles. Some of these examples are:

- A little boy who gives his lunch to Jesus to feed at least 5,000 people (Matthew 14:14-21).
- The Good Samaritan’s charitable deeds towards the traveler who was attacked and wounded by robbers. He gave his time and money to meet the needs of the victim who was attacked by robbers on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho (Luke 10:30-35).
- Zacchaeus offering half of his wealth for the benefit of the poor although, probable as a restitution after his conversion (Luke 19:8).
- Barnabas and other members giving of the proceeds of sale of real estate towards the welfare of the needy in the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 4:34-37).
- Tabitha (Dorcas) charitable deeds towards widows in the early church (Acts 9:36-39).
- The collection of the Gentile churches for the benefit of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 24:17; Rom 15:25, 26; 1 Cor 16:1-3; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15)
- The Philippian church charitable giving towards the support of the ministry of Paul (Phil 4:14-18).

### **Motivations and Blessings of Charitable Giving**

Generally, charitable giving may be determined by the awareness of a need by a donor and solicitation for donations from individuals, church or organizations. It could also be motivated by a donors’ reputational concerns and values as some studies have shown.<sup>2</sup> However, writing on what should constitute the right motives of giving, Ellen G. White counseled:

Christ’s own words make His meaning plain, —that in acts of charity the aim should not be to secure praise and honor from men. Real godliness never prompts an effort at display. Those who desire words of praise and flattery, and feed upon them as a sweet morsel, are Christians in name only.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, one may then suggest that biblical charitable giving should have different and more worthy determinants even when the giver may or may not have heard solicitation (s) and may or

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<sup>2</sup> Michaela Neumayr and Femida Handy, “Charitable Giving: What Influences Donors’ Choice Among Different Causes?” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* volume 30 (2019): 783–799.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsel on Stewardship*, (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1940), 195.

may not know the need of the beneficiaries. The Scriptures in this regard provide us with appropriate motives for charitable giving. Some of these are discussed herein.

### *Response to Gift of Salvation*

Christ's self-emptying for our salvation is the foundation of a believer's service to God. This heavenly gift is without cost to humanity nor can its value be estimated. Paul in speaking of this exhorts the Corinthian church on Christian liberality thus: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor 8:9 NKJV). Ellen G. White writing in this perspective affirms: "The apostle enforces the duty of giving from higher grounds than merely human sympathy, because the feelings are moved. He enforces the principle that we should labor unselfishly with an eye single to the glory of God."<sup>4</sup> She further states,

The plan of redemption was laid in sacrifice, —a sacrifice so broad and deep and high that is immeasurable. Christ gave all for us, and those who receive Christ will be ready to sacrifice all for the sake of their Redeemer. The thought of His honor and glory will come before anything else.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, charitable giving, which is giving beyond the regular tithes and offerings, is appropriately a response of gratitude to the invaluable sacrifice that God has made on behalf of humanity. It is part of a believer's demonstration of his/her thankfulness for the sacrificial love of God towards humanity

### *Love*

Love is the greatest motivation. Love for God and fellow suffering humanity is the true motive of charitable giving. Writing to the Corinthian church Paul says that one may give away everything he has and even his life to help others, but it is garbage if it is devoid of Christian love (1 Cor 13:3). The genuine concern for the welfare of others out of love is therefore, imperative in charitable giving (Phil 2:3-4)

In this regard, Ellen G. White counsels

We are to give in sincerity, not to make a show of our good deeds, but from pity and love to the suffering ones. Sincerity of purpose, real kindness of heart, is the motive that heaven values. The soul that is sincere in its love, wholehearted in its devotion, God regards as more precious than the golden wedge of Ophir... We are not to think of reward, but of service; yet kindness shown in this spirit will not fail of its recompense<sup>6</sup>

### *Living in Eschatological Perspective*

One of the moral lessons in the parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21) that Christ told as a rebuke for covetousness and greed, is that compulsive desire or obsession for personal economic security could affect human perception of the real essence of life. It seems also that Ananias and Saphira held back part of the portion of what they had promised to give due to this challenge (Acts 5:1ff). But the cognizance of the reality of vanity of wealth and resources and human orientation towards eschatology could motivate charitable giving. Consequently, for a believer, the real essence of life now is to prepare for eschatology. Such orientation could moderate one's attitude towards the acquisition and management of wealth and possessions (Luke 12:16-34). Charitable giving could then be motivated and enhanced when one lives in eschatological perspective. Thus, charitable giving not only may assist a believer to accept that abundant life cannot be measured by how much we accumulate but also help them to live in eschatological perspective.

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<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1872), 3:391

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsel on Stewardship* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1940), 197.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1896), 81, 82.

### *Assurance of God's Faithfulness*

It is probable that the concern for immediate personal needs may inhabit charitable giving, especially for those who may have limitations of resources. But, even such persons could be encouraged with assurance of God's faithfulness. Paul assures that "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor 9:8; cf. Prov 19:17; Luke 6:38; Phil 4:19). Therefore, the person who delights in charitable giving may not lose in giving. God does replenish in various ways what has been given out of love for the welfare of others and for His mission.

### **Attitude Towards Charitable Giving**

The Scriptures provide us some exemplary attitude that may govern charitable giving. Some of these are discussed here.

#### *Adopt Planned Charitable Giving*

This could be done monthly, based on income stream of the giver or predetermined regular intervals. One may also give by leaving a gift to charity in one's will (1 Cor 16:1-2).

#### *Give faithfully and cheerfully*

Charitable giving is not part of tithe and regular offering. But one could still give faithfully and cheerfully according to his/her economic capacity or endowment. Both the OT and NT exhort on this attitude (Deut 15:10; 2 Cor 9:6, 7).

#### *Charitable giving as a lifestyle*

Charitable giving could be a lifestyle. In this case, a believer adopts a lifestyle that constantly makes provision for the underprivileged in society and God's mission. This was perhaps, God's expectation from the Jews in the rebuke that Isaiah records about the abuses of fasting and worship (Isa 58:6-8)

### **Avenues for Charitable Giving**

We earlier gave some biblical examples of charitable giving to a cause. One could also choose to systematically direct his/her charitable giving to any or some of the following suggested causes:

- Prison Ministry
- Education of indigent children
- Food for the less-privileged
- Welfare of indigent widows
- Orphanage
- Welfare of the ailing
- Welfare of the aged
- Welfare of the injured
- Shelter for the homeless
- Healthcare expenses
- Evangelism and outreach programs

### **Conclusion**

Biblical charitable giving is an additional but necessary act of service beyond the Christian duty of tithe and offerings. This practice could be joyous for a believer when viewed from the perspective of the incomparable gift of salvation that is made possible because of the invaluable heavenly sacrifice at the Cross. Thus, it becomes part of a Christian's response to the unequalled

sacrifice of God to save humanity. The worthy biblical examples and motivations for charitable giving could compel a believer to plan charitable giving, give faithfully and cheerfully, and choose a cause to give.