

The Dynamic Steward Bible Study: Charitable Giving

Introduction

So, what is charitable giving? Charitable giving refers to any donations besides tithe and offerings given through an organization or directly to someone in need. Lovingly giving your property, such as money, good-quality clothes, a vehicle, household items, land, hospitality, your talents, or whatever you have, constitutes charitable giving. Volunteer time also is a valuable charitable gift. In so doing, the donor receives nothing of value in return, except the joy of knowing that he/she has made a difference for the better in the recipient's life. More effective charitable giving happens when we empower recipients, over time, to be givers themselves.

In order for charitable giving to be truly "charitable" giving, the donor must willingly give with a charitable (loving) heart. (1 Corinthians 13:3)

What does the Bible say about charitable giving? Let's explore a few of many Bible references related to charitable giving.

1. First of all, what is charity? (1 Corinthians 13; Acts 9:36)
 - Depending on your Bible translation, "charity" and "love" are used interchangeably. In 1 Corinthians 13, they are translations of the Greek word *agape*.
 - Dorcas was full of good works and charity. The Greek word here (*eleēmosunon*) means charitable giving, sympathy, compassion. (Kurt Aland, et. al. [eds.], *Analytical Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 1994).
 - Charity isn't only about money, but can be about giving whatever you have (Acts 3:6).
 - Sometimes we give donations to a "charity" to support a worthy cause, such as helping the poor and needy. However, there is more to charity than that, although giving to a "charity" is included.
2. What are some sample Bible references to charitable giving? (Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Proverbs 19:17; Luke 10:25-37; Romans 12:7, 8; James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17, 18)
 - God is the Supreme Example of charitable giving when he lovingly gave His Son as a saving gift to the human race (John 3:16). It is natural for his followers to follow His example with charitable giving. We give to those in need, and thus, to God as our response to His love for us (1 John 4:19).
3. What is the relationship between giving tithes and offerings and charitable giving? (Malachi 3:10).
 - In ancient times the Jewish temple had special storehouses to receive tithes of the harvest. If God's people were not faithful the priests could not serve and continue their duties. (*Amplified Bible* note for Malachi 3:10). In our times, tithe of our income is to be brought into the storehouse (Church) for support of those who are in full-time ministry so that they can serve and continue to perform their duties. Offerings are for the

support of the Church's operation and mission. After tithe and offerings, charitable giving donations are for people who need help. However, it is not God's plan that church members neglect tithe and offerings and only give charitable donations.

4. What attitudes and motives are part of truly charitable giving? (Matthew 6:2-4; Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:32-34; Romans 12:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 13:3; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Philippians 2:3, 4)
 - Giving with humility, not to be noticed, or to feel good about ourselves.
 - Giving sacrificially, when necessary.
 - Giving generously.
 - Giving cheerfully. "It were better not to give at all than to give grudgingly; for if we impart of our means when we have not the spirit to give freely, we mock God" (*Counsels on Stewardship* p. 199). This quote is in the context of freewill offerings for church – but can be applied to any gift given for God's Kingdom.
 - Giving humbly and unselfishly, regarding the recipients as more important than yourselves.

5. What does the Bible say about properly training children in the way they should go—which, of course, includes unselfish giving to others? (Proverbs 22:6).
 - "Learn the lesson of self-denial, and teach it to your children. All that can be saved by self-denial is needed now in the work to be done. The suffering must be relieved, the naked clothed, the hungry fed... " (*Child Guidance*, p. 131).
 - "Children are to be educated to deny themselves....in every home there should be a self-denial box, and ...into this box the children should be taught to put their pennies they would otherwise spend for candy and other unnecessary things." "You will find that as the children place their pennies in these boxes, they will gain a great blessing" (*Ibid.*, 132).
 - Another idea is to give each child three envelopes labeled: SAVE, GIVE, SPEND. When they receive money, they can divide it between the three envelopes. The contents of the GIVE envelope can be divided between tithe, offering, and charitable giving. Children should continue to replenish the envelopes as they give.
 - A helpful tool for children in their charitable giving is to choose and fund a need listed in the *ADRA Gift Catalog* for kids that comes out during the Christmas holiday.

6. What counsel did Jesus give about one-sided charitable giving? How can the dignity of needy people be preserved? (Acts 20:35).
 - When we give to those in need, we must remember to give them the gift of dignity also. When we empower them to provide for themselves and others, their dignity is restored, and they personally experience the blessing of giving. "When recipients remain recipients and givers are content to remain givers, good has become the enemy of best. Perhaps the best giving is the kind that enables the poor to know the blessedness of being givers." (Robert J. Lupton, *Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life: Rethinking Ministry to the Poor* [Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007], 55.)

- John Perkins, a Christian leader in community development, says that acts of charity can be dangerous if not done wisely. Why? “Because givers can feel good about actions that actually accomplish very little, or even create dependency. The result is that their sense of satisfaction takes away any motivation to seek more creative long-range development strategies. Overcoming an attitude of charity is a difficult task because it requires givers to demand more of themselves than good will” (John M. Perkins, *Beyond Charity: The Call to Christian Community Development* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 23. Perkins further explains that when showing charity, “somehow we have to disconnect what and how we give from our need to feel good about ourselves” (Perkins, 28).
7. What counsel did the apostle Paul give the Christian Church regarding wisdom and discernment in charitable giving? (1 Timothy 5:3-16)
- God doesn’t ask us to blindly give to every need that comes to our attention. Most of us aren’t overflowing with money and resources, so we must prioritize and choose with discernment recipients who will properly use our donations.
 - For example, in giving detailed counsel to Timothy regarding church charitable support for widows, Paul explains that not all widows should receive charitable donations from the church. Some widows still have active support from their children and other relatives, a family’s Christian responsibility and priority (1 Timothy 3:4). Widows eligible for charitable support from their church family are widows who are desolate, without any means of support from family (vv. 3, 5).
8. How can you assure that you will have financial resources to share? (1 Corinthians 16:1-3)
- Members of the early church gave charitable donations to support the poor. Paul directed that these donations be set aside regularly, according to each church member’s income, and saved to be delivered to the intended needy recipients in Jerusalem. In our times, we need intentionality in our planning for charitable giving. For money gifts, this money needs to be set aside. Perhaps you can put into your budget a “be-a-blessing/special needs” fund that you regularly set aside and allocate when you do your monthly budget. Then when a need comes up, you have something available to give. Of course, there are other ways to give too, as previously mentioned. However, money is always needed.
 - The “self-denial box” recommended by Ellen White that was referenced in question 4 is another example of “setting aside” money for giving.
 - Ellen White believed that one should not spend an entire income. A reserve should be kept for a “rainy day,” when a need arises. She had a sock in her kitchen cabinet where she would secretly place money that she pulled out of her income. (*White, A. L., Ellen G. White: The Early Years: 1827-1862*, vol. 1 [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985], 272).
 - God may impress you to start a charitable non-profit organization/foundation.

9. How can you plan for many years in the future in regard to charitable giving? (Luke 12:16-31)
- Charitable giving is a blessed practice for the present, but you should lay plans for charitable giving in the future. Yes, the rich man was wise in planning for the future by storing his bountiful crops in larger storehouses. But, unfortunately, he was also foolish because his planning was all about him. He had no plans to share with others in need what he had hoarded. All he thought about was that he had many good things stored up that would provide for him for many years, and that he could then “rest and relax, eat, drink and be merry (celebrate continually)” (Luke 12:19, *Amplified Bible*). God called him a fool. He was not “rich toward God” (v. 21).
 - One way to be “rich toward God” is to plan for charitable giving in your Last Will and Testament, Trust, etc. Of course, the practice of giving to the poor during your lifetime also builds the “treasure in heaven,” that Jesus offered to the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-25).
10. What benefits come to the giver of charitable gifts? (Proverbs 11:24, 25; Proverbs 28:27; Isaiah 58:6-11; Luke 6:38)
- Our own welfare is intimately related to that of our fellow human beings (Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1977), 306
 - “Doing good is a work that benefits both giver and receiver” (*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 534).
 - “The *pleasure* of doing good to others imparts a glow to the feelings which flashes to the nerves, quickens the circulation of the blood, and induces mental and physical health” (*Welfare Ministry*, p. 303).
 - Research has shown that there is a clear cause-and-effect relationship between helping and good health. A study of 3,296 volunteers performing acts of kindness established a clear cause-and-effect relationship between helping and good health. (See, Allan Luks with Peggy Payne, *The Healing Power of Doing Good*, Lincoln, Nebraska: iUniverse.com, Inc., 2001).
11. What will be the final test at the end of time that is connected with charitable giving? (Matthew 25:34-46).
- “Practical godliness is the only kind of religion recognized at the judgment bar of God” (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (vol. 4), 306.
 - Charitable giving in all its forms is a serious eschatological issue: “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another. Thus, Christ on the Mount of Olives pictured to His disciples the scene of the great judgment day. And He represented its decision as turning upon one point. When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering.” (*The Desire of Ages*, 637).
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