

**Section: For Individuals – Lifestyle Issues**

**Title: Giving to support the work of God**

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I think we all grow weary of the constant demands on our wallets and purses. Some may be to pay for life's essentials, heating, mortgage, car; some are for those treats we reward ourselves with at the end of a hard month; city breaks away, theatre trips or that self-indulgent, naughty bar of chocolate.

In our society of need how do we differentiate between what's essential for living and what is indeed an extra? Is gym membership essential? The latest CD? Are our tithes and offerings the dispensable part of our monthly outgoings?

When we set aside time for our quiet times and prayer times we send a clear message to God that He is central in our life. Is it not the same with tithing and offering our finances to God too? Tithes and offerings are about planned giving to God. Money that we decide at the start of each month or each year is for God and His work. It is about taking responsibility for where all our finances go and how we honour God with them. Tithes are 10% of our income and offerings can be anything up to the other 90% given to God.

So, where did this principle of tithes and offerings come from? Is it some convenient Christian expedient to raise funds for falling down Victorian church buildings or is it actually grounded firmly in biblical teachings?

The answer is that as far back as Genesis 14 v20 Abram gave God a tenth of everything he owned after God helped him defeat his enemies. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8v 2-3 Paul writes to the Corinthians about their giving. It seems that the Old Testament principle of tithing is the very least of what Macedonian churches give as their generosity goes beyond all expectations *'Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own'*

Would it not be exciting to be with a person who just gave to God because they genuinely wanted to bless people? Imagine being on the receiving end of such a blessing? How much more affirmed in their calling would church leaders, overseas missionaries and Christian workers feel if all the Christians they came across had that attitude? What would that say to those who don't yet believe?

The bottom line is that if Christians don't finance Christian organisations and churches no one else will. It is widely recognised that the faith sector is expected to fund its own work. In the main statutory bodies do not give funding to organisations with religious affiliations. It is therefore down to the Christian community to fund its own work if we really value it.

## Stewardship Forum

Part and parcel of being a Christian is giving away at least 10% of what we earn for God's work, just as regular prayer times and bible study, church membership and actively creating Christian friendships are. We know that through these sacrifices we get '*life in all its fullness*' (John 10v10b) So is it not worth it?

In the end, if we are generous with our finances for God, as with everything else, we benefit anyway! So begin to write those cheques and set up standing orders, the Body of Christ needs you!

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