



Giving

AT CENTRAL



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The background features several overlapping circles in shades of red and orange. Overlaid on these circles are several fingerprints drawn in a light red color. The text is positioned on the right side of the page, primarily within the larger orange circle.

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How to be good stewards of what God has given us



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The first step in giving

“Do not store up treasures here on earth, where they can be eaten by moths and get rusty, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth-eaten or rusty and where they will be safe from thieves. Wherever your treasure is, there your heart will also be...No one can serve two masters. For you will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Matthew 6:19–24 NLT

The foundation for understanding why we should give or how we should use our time, our “treasures” and our talents begins by recognising two facts:

One:

God is the owner of all things — because he has created everything (Psalm 24:1), and because he has redeemed, or purchased, us as his people (1 Peter 1:18). We see this truth in David’s statement: “Who am I, and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” *1 Chronicles 29:14*

Two:

We are the stewards of all things — this is why God made us and placed us on the earth (Genesis 1:28; 2:15). Yet God does not impose this responsibility upon us, but rather invites us to submit our lives to him and to share in his work. So, when we give of ourselves and our means, we are showing our love for God and, as followers of Jesus, our appreciation for all he has done for us as our saviour and Lord. It is also a key marker of our obedience, our faith and our commitment to the spread of his kingdom in our world.

Questions to reflect upon or discuss

1. Let’s all take time to reflect on all that God has provided for each of us and perhaps make a list. What does this teach us about what God is like? Spend some time giving thanks for these things.
2. Read over 1 Chronicles 28 & 29, which describes the actions of David relating to the building of the temple for God, and his subsequent prayer. How did the leaders and the rest of the people respond when they saw how David acted? What does David’s prayer teach us about how having a correct view of God should shape the way we live and what we give to God’s work?

What Jesus said about money

When you start to read through the Bible, it won't be long before you are struck by the sheer enormity of Scripture's teaching on money, giving and stewardship.

For example, in sixteen out of the thirty-eight recorded parables that Jesus told, he speaks about the subject of material possessions and what we should do with them.

On several occasions, Jesus linked one's attitude to possessions even to an individual's salvation. We see this, for example, in the story of Zacchaeus who offered to give half of his money to the poor and pay back to others what he had cheated them of. Jesus responded to this outward act of generosity by saying "Today salvation has come to this house." *Luke 19:9*

The flip side of this was an individual called a "rich young ruler" who came to Jesus seeking eternal life and a relationship with God. Jesus told him, "Go sell your possessions, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me." We are told the young man, sadly, walked away from Jesus because he loved his wealth more than salvation and knowing God. *Mark 10:17-27*

Martin Luther is quoted as saying, "For each of those who would follow Christ, there must not only be conversion of the heart and the mind, but also conversion of the purse or wallet!"

To put this another way, our perspective on how we handle our money can often be a litmus test of our true character and an index on the depth of our spiritual life. For a person to live under the lordship of Jesus Christ means that what they do with their money is no longer their business — it is now God's business. Paul summarises Jesus' whole teaching on this subject when he reminds a group of believers "You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Acts 20:35

Questions to reflect upon or discuss

1. Why do you think Jesus spoke so much about material possessions? Many Christians over the years believed that Jesus set an example to us, by how he lived, especially in relation to living more simply, with generosity and contentment, rather than seeking after or accumulating things. Do you agree?
2. Select one of the parables that Jesus told on stewardship (i.e. Matthew 20:1-16; Luke 12:16-31; Luke 16:1-13; Luke 19:11-28). What is Jesus trying to teach us about God, and ourselves in this parable?

How should we give?

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each one should give what they have decided in their heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” *2 Corinthians 9:6*

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were to give freely and generously to support the work of God and those who ministered on his behalf. They did so in response to their understanding that their God had redeemed them, loved them and called them to be his own people. They gave to God through the means of “tithes and offerings”. The first of these (tithes) basically supported those who served the Lord through the Temple and its ministry. The second consisted of voluntary offerings which helped to support a wide range of things such as special events, times of extraordinary need and caring for the poor.

When we turn to the New Testament, we see how the first followers of Jesus sought to obey his teaching and be good stewards of what they had received (Acts 2:42). Therefore, as disciples of Christ who seek to follow him, we believe this should cover all areas of our lives including our time, thoughts, actions and use of our money. In Paul’s writings, the clearest and most straightforward section dealing with how we should give is found in 2 Corinthians 8–9.

Please take time to read over these chapters and consider the following principles that emerge from them to guide us in how to give towards God’s work.

Questions to reflect upon or discuss

1. In what ways were the Corinthian believers an example in how to give?
2. What does Paul say should be the greatest motivation behind why and what we give? (see 2 Cor. 8:1, 9 & 9:14)
3. The gift that these believers gave was so sacrificial and precious, that Paul entrusts its delivery to someone whom he can trust. Why is it important for church leaders to place safeguards around what is given to support God’s work?
4. What are the blessings promised to those who give freely and generously?



Practical ways to give at Central

The easiest way to give to our church is via the website. If you go to the church website and click the “give” option at the top of the screen it will take you to the following link: www.centralchurch.co.uk/about/give/

Regular Donation

Once there you will find our bank details for making either a one-off donation, or setting up a regular gift. It should be fairly straightforward, but please don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you need any assistance. Setting up a regular donation by **standing order** to the church enables the leaders to better know what is coming in and then budget accordingly. This is one of the aspects of being an “All-In” member that we commit to each year. And you can always review what you are able to give. It is probably wise to do this once a year or when your circumstances change.

If you are a UK taxpayer, we would also appreciate if you could complete the **gift-aid** form on the website. This enables us to recover an additional 25% from all that is given.

Giving Boxes

If you wish to make a donation by cash or cheque, then we suggest you put this in a secure envelope and place it in one of the boxes marked “give” attached to the walls in the main church auditorium. We do not take up a collection in our Sunday gatherings.

DONA

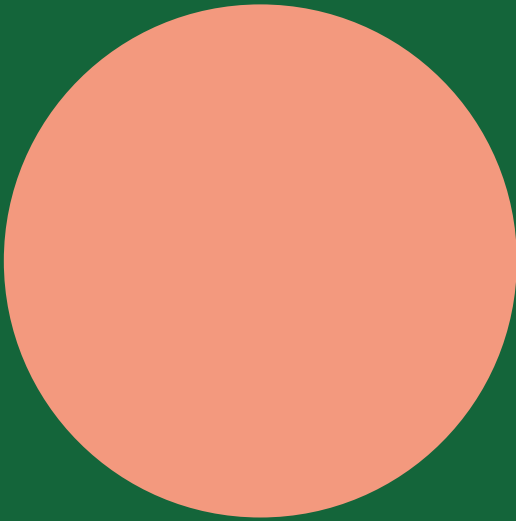
You can also give one-off donations by using the **DONA machine** at church. This is quite straightforward to use, but again please ask if you ever need any assistance.

HVI Project

You will also notice we have a special project in place just now called the **HVI Project**. Donations can also be made towards this to help upgrade the heating, ventilation and insulation of our building. Please take note, however, any regular gifts towards the ministry of Central should be given into the general fund. This project is sustained through additional, voluntary contributions.

“Not equal gifts
– but equal sacrifice!”

And lastly, let's remember the incident recorded in Mark 12:41–44, which took place as Jesus was leaving the Temple for the last time, just before his arrest and death. It records how a poor widow gave two small copper coins into the temple treasury (just a few pennies in our currency today). This story reminds us that ultimately it is God who takes note what we give. This lady gave all she had and Jesus noticed! The lesson here is it's not what others see that counts, but rather the fact that God sees our hearts.



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Central Church

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Scottish charity number SC005871

FAQ

I already give to missionary work or other charities. Why prioritise Central over these?

We believe there is a consistent precedent set forth in Scripture showing how God's people gave first and foremost to supporting the community of which they were a part and then, in addition to this, gave towards the wider needs around them. But, even by giving in this way, they were still supporting God's kingdom work outside and beyond their own community. At Central we make it a priority to give a proportion of what is given towards supporting our community partners (Bethany Christian Trust, Shared Hope, International Justice Mission and Baptist Missionary Society), as well as supporting a number of other local and national Christian charities, events and projects that, together, are seeking to extend God's kingdom.

In the Old Testament, tithes were given primarily to support those who oversaw the ministry of worship, teaching and pastoral care of the people (the Priests and Levites). Special gifts or offerings were then taken up, as well, to support other causes. There was also an additional special tithe taken every three years to support the poor, the foreigner, the widows and the orphans among the people.

In the New Testament, Acts records various examples of how the first Christians brought their gifts and "placed them before the Apostles" (Acts 4:35) so that they, in turn, might distribute them accordingly. Paul also instructed the churches to take up collections each week (1 Cor. 16:2), so that the Apostles, elders or other church leaders could then direct this to where it was most needed.

How should I calculate what I give (on my gross or net income)?

One should not be too prescriptive or legalistic about this. We should make our own judgement on this matter but, whatever we decide, it is still important to remember that God calls us to be generous and cheerful in our giving, and seek first his kingdom.

I can't afford to give regularly, never mind a tenth (or a proportion) of my income.

Often life can get tough, and we can lose our jobs, struggle to get regular employment or simply hit difficult or challenging times. This often happened in the early Church too (see Acts 2:42-47), and the first Christians made sure they cared for one another, especially the most vulnerable.

If you can't give because you are struggling in some way, or are dealing with debt, there are organisations such as CAP (based here at Central) who can help you in this challenging situation to get back on your feet, so that you can then start to give as you are able.

Whatever sacrifice means to us, God sees and knows our circumstances. And learning to give can actually be a good spiritual discipline for us, teaching us how to use our money properly, how to save better, and how to put God and others before ourselves.

Should I tithe? Is this a biblical pattern for giving?

“You, my people, are robbing me - your God. And yet you are, asking, ‘How are we robbing you?’ You are robbing me of the tithe and offerings that belong to me. That's why you are suffering so much. I am the LORD, the Almighty one, and I challenge you to put me to the test. Bring the entire tithe into the Temple storehouse, so there will be ample provision in my house. Then I will open the windows of heaven and flood you with blessing after blessing.” (Malachi 3:8-10 CEV)

Historically, Christians have been divided on whether the Old Testament principle of *tithing* (giving a tenth of our income to God) is expected or binding upon them today.

One view is that it was set down as a principle by God in the Torah to be observed by all of his people for all time (see Leviticus 27:30-31; Deuteronomy 14:22-28). In the Old Testament, the tithe belonged to God in the first place, therefore it was not an option to calculate how much one should give, whether or not one felt like it or that it was some special offering one was giving to God. It was purely an act of joyful obedience, giving back to God what was rightfully his.

The fact that Abraham and Jacob are recorded in Genesis as doing this (before the Torah was instituted) are examples that this could be a universal principle which God set in place and is instinctive to all of us, whatever our culture or faith background.

Also, Jesus instructs the leaders of his day by saying they “ought to tithe” (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42), and some would say this is still relevant to us as his followers.

Others do not accept that all of this applies to us today however. Tithing is never set forth in the New Testament as binding upon Christians or as the main/ only way they should give. Some still find it a helpful pattern to follow, teaching them to set aside a certain amount, each month, and give towards supporting the ministry of their local church. Often, they will also give one-off special offerings, as various needs and projects arise – and as they are able.

Whichever view we take, there are certain principles which remain the same:

1. Seek to put God, his kingdom and his work first in our lives.
2. Set aside a regular amount in keeping with what we earn, and ensure we are regularly supporting the ministry of our local church.
3. Give generously and cheerfully, never under compulsion.

Feel free to contact one of the senior staff or elders at any time if you have any questions or would appreciate chatting about how to apply these principles in your life as a member of Central. Please also note that personal information of who gives, or what is given is only monitored by Louise Wright (Operations & Finance Manager), Kenny Roy (Accountant) and Jim McKay (Gift-Aid Administrator).