

PERFECTLY PROPER PRESENT PRESENTING

INTRODUCTION:

Scripture: (2 Cor 9:6-8) But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. {7} Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. {8} And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Title: Cobwebs

An artist was asked to put on canvas what he considered to be the picture best symbolizing a decaying and dying church. After several months, he returned and reported that he had finished the task. The hour finally arrived when the painting was to be unveiled.

Several people standing around the easel had already given their description of what they thought the church would look like. Some had said it would be a rundown building in great need of repair and paint. Weeds would be growing in the church yard, and there would be some broken window panes. Everyone in the group seemed to have the same picture in mind.

However, when the cloth was removed, a hush fell over the group. Everyone was stunned. Before their eyes was an absolutely beautiful church building. The grounds were well kept and the exterior of the building was in excellent condition. After a few minutes, one person stepped forward and said to the artist, "I thought we asked you to paint a dying church?"

The artist smiled and invited everyone to step closer to the painting. He pointed through the windows to the empty pews and to the collection plate on the table. There was nothing in the plate but "cobwebs."

The church that has cobwebs in its collection plate is a church that is decaying and dying. Without the giver, there is no giving. Without the giving, ministries cannot be conducted by the church. Without ministries being conducted, the mission of the church cannot be carried out. If the mission of the church is not carried out, the church is purposeless and dead.

- I. POSSIBLE - (Mark 12:42-44) And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. {43} And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: {44} For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

Topic: Giving, Sacrificial / Benevolence

At one time India seemed to have so many people and so little food that it seemed a hopeless situation. Then came the "green revolution." While being mindful that India still has problems, it is worth noting that in the list of nations which helped with the famine in Ethiopia was India.

- II. PRACTICAL - (2 Cor 8:12-15) For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. {13} For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: {14} But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: {15} As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

Topic: Giving, To God / Money

An old country preacher was earnestly exhorting his congregation to give more liberally. He was interrupted by a deacon who said, "Parson, you told us salvation is free -- as free as the air we breathe and the water in the river. If that's true, why are you always asking us for money?" The elderly preacher solemnly replied, "Brother Jones, you're right. Salvation is free -- as free as the water you drink. But if you want that water in the kitchen, somebody has to pay for the pump!"

- III. PLEASING - (2 Cor 9:7-8) Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

(Rom 12:1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Topic: Giving, Sacrificial / Worship, True

A vital part of worship is giving. We are to respond to the needs of the church and God's people in a loving, sacrificial manner. Leslie B. Flynn illustrated this kind of personal giving in his book *Worship*. He wrote, "A man was packing a shipment of food contributed by a school for the poor people of Appalachia. He was separating beans from powdered milk, and canned vegetables from canned meats. Reaching into a box filled with various cans, he pulled out a little brown paper sack. Apparently one of the pupils had brought something different from the items on the suggested list. Out of the paper bag fell a peanut butter sandwich, an apple, and a cookie. Crayoned in large letters was a little girl's name, 'Christy -- Room 104'. She had given up her lunch for some hungry person."

IV. PROFUSE - (2 Sam 24:24-25) And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. {25} And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

Title: A Dollar Birthday

The greatest surprise of Mary's life was receiving a dollar on her fourth birthday. She carried the bill about the house and was seen sitting on the stairs admiring it. "What are you going to do with your dollar?" her mother asked. "Take it to Sunday School," said Mary promptly. "To show your teacher?" Mary shook her head. "No," she said. "I'm going to give it to God. He'll be as surprised as I am to get something besides pennies."

V. PROPERLY POINTED - (Mat 22:21) They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Topic: Giving, To God / Benevolence

Have you ever considered the many motives that are substituted for the proper attitude in giving?

- * General good of the church
- * Group pressure
- * Pride or embarrassment
- * Social approval
- * Pity
- * Tax exemption
- * Conscience salving
- * Fear
- * Owing the tithe
- * Humanitarian ideas
- * Loyalty
- * Example of Christ
- * Rewards
- * Pursuit of happiness

All may be included in the spontaneous willing heart attitude -- but none can replace or substitute for it.

VI. PARADOXICAL - (Luke 6:38) Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

(Mal 3:10) Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Topic: Giving, To God / Benevolence

Baylor University is a fine institution in Beaumont, Texas. The Christian who gave the money for building that school later lost all his property. Men of the world asked him, "Don't you wish you had the money back that you put into that school?" He replied, "Not at all. It is all that I have saved. If I had kept that money, I would have lost it too. I am thankful that I gave that building when I did."

VII. PERSONAL - (Luke 11:41) But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

Topic: Giving, Sacrificial / Humility

In the fourth year of his layoff from his job, Dad gave Mom a dishwasher for Christmas.

You have to understand the magnitude of the gift: Our old house had its original wiring and plumbing, and neither could handle the required installation. There was no spot in the small kitchen for such a large appliance. And we hadn't even been able to meet the mortgage interest payments for over six months.

But Dad hated the thought of washing dishes; he would rather do anything else. And Mom had undergone major surgery that spring, a radical mastectomy for breast cancer, and found it difficult to do any work requiring the use of her arms.

No large box appeared, no new plumbing or wiring was installed, no remodeling of the kitchen occurred.

Rather, a small note appeared on a branch of the Christmas tree, handwritten by Dad:

"For one year I will wash all of the dirty dishes in this household. Every one."

And he did. He really did. -- Judy Rogers, Westerville, Ohio, in Guideposts, Dec. 1988

VIII. PRIVATE - (Mat 6:2-4) Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. {3} But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: {4} That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

Topic: Giving Humor

In MOTLEY'S CREW, the preacher says, "And so on this beautiful Sunday, as the collection basket is passed among you, I ask you to recall the words of the Bible, 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.'" Worshiper: "Hey, Mike, how come you smile when you render unto God but not when you render unto Caesar?" Mike whispers: "God doesn't audit."

IX. PUBLIC - (1 Cor 16:1-2) Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. {2} Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Topic: Giving, To God / Offerings

Our church held a Sunday service patterned after those in Colonial America. The preacher dressed in a long coat and knickers, and the congregation was divided by gender: men on the left side of the aisle and women on the right.

At collection time, the preacher announced that this, too, would be done in the old way. He asked the "head of the household" to come forward and place the money on the altar. The man instantly rose. To the amusement of the entire congregation, many of them crossed the aisle to get the money from their wives. -- Reader's Digest, June 1989

X. PROFOUND - (Mal 3:8-9) Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. {9} Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

Title: The Church Treasurer Resigns

The day the church treasurer resigned the church asked the local grain elevator manager to take the position. He agreed under two conditions.

That no treasurer's report would be given for the first year.

That no questions be asked about finances during that year.

The people were surprised but finally agreed since most of them did business with him and he was a trusted man.

At the end of the year he gave his report:

* The church indebtedness of \$228,000 has been paid.

* The minister's salary had been increased by 8%.

* The Cooperative Program gifts had been paid 200%.

* There were no outstanding bills.

* And there was a cash balance of \$11,252!

Immediately the shocked congregation asked, "How did you do it? Where did the money come from?"

He quietly answered: "Most of you bring your grain to my elevator. Throughout the year I simply withheld ten percent on your behalf and gave it to the church in your name. You didn't even miss it!"

"Do you see what we could do for the Lord if we were all willing to give at least the tithe to God, who really owns it?" And so the new treasurer had made his point. -- from A Sourcebook for Stewardship Sermons, by James E. Carter

XI. PROPORTIONAL - (1 Cor 16:1-2) Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. {2} Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Title: Welfare Tithe

If every church member in the United States were to suddenly lose his/her job and went on welfare, and yet were willing to tithe from the minimal amount received from public assistance, giving in the nation's churches would immediately increase over 30%!

Love of the right use of money is the root of all good. -- The Herald of the Covenant

XII. PATTERNED - (1 Cor 16:1-2) Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. {2} Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Title: Convenient Debts

A man received a sharp letter from one of his creditors demanding payment. He wrote back to the firm and said, "Dear Sir. Every month I take all the bills I have and put them on the table, shuffle them, and pick out six, which I pay. Now, if I have any more trouble out of you, next month you'll be out of the shuffle entirely." Have you shuffled God out of your giving?

XIII. PURPOSEFUL - (Phil 4:14-17) Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. {15} Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. {16} For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. {17} Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

Title: I'm Glad My Church Needs Money

I'M GLAD MY CHURCH NEEDS MONEY! If it didn't it would mean it wasn't supporting missionaries and preaching the Gospel in other places and has no missionary zeal.

I'M GLAD MY CHURCH NEEDS MONEY! If it didn't, it would mean it wasn't doing anything to support the homeless and needy and had no compassion.

I'M GLAD MY CHURCH NEEDS MONEY! If it didn't, it would mean it wasn't interested in providing wholesome activities for our teenagers and had no concern.

I'M GLAD MY CHURCH NEEDS MONEY! If it didn't, it would mean it wasn't interested in teaching children in those impressionable years and had no future.

XIV. PREDETERMINED - (2 Cor 9:5) Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up before hand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

(2 Cor 8:10-11) And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. {11} Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

Topic: Giving, Scriptural Rules for

What place does God have in your budget? Do you give Him priority over everything else, or does He get just

the leftovers -- the few dollars you can easily spare?

An African convert who loved the Lord earned money by making and selling a special kind of bean cake. She had always been conscientious in her giving, but after suffering a severe foot injury in an accident her income ceased. It was many long months before she could resume her work.

Eagerly she awaited the day she could sell her tasty cakes again. She promised the missionary that she would give one-third of her earnings to the Lord instead of just 10 percent. She said her goal for the first week of business was to make a profit of 3 shillings. The missionary was surprised, therefore, when the woman returned after only 2 days with one shilling as an offering for the Lord. "You surely haven't earned 3 shillings already!" he exclaimed. The woman was perplexed by his response. "Do you think I would give my Lord the last of the three?" she asked. "This is the first one and it belongs to Him -- the other two I make, will be for me."

XV. PLEASANT - (Acts 20:35) I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Topic: Giving, To God / Benevolence

The Jews had a famous story about a certain King Monobaz of Adiabene who became a convert to Judaism. "Monobaz distributed all his treasures to the poor in the year of famine. His brothers sent to him and said, 'Thy fathers gathered treasures, and added to those of their fathers, but thou hast dispersed yours and theirs.' He said to them, 'My fathers gathered treasures for below, I have gathered treasures for above; they stored treasures in a place over which the hand of man can rule, but I have stored treasures in a place over which the hand of man cannot rule; my fathers collected treasures which bear no interest, I have gathered treasures which bear interest; my fathers gathered treasures of money, I have gathered treasures in souls; my fathers gathered treasures for others, I have gathered treasures for myself; my fathers gathered treasures in this world, I have gathered treasures for the world to come.'"

Both Jesus and the Jewish Rabbis were sure that what is selfishly hoarded is lost, but that what is generously given away brings treasure in heaven.

XVI. PROFITABLE - (Phil 4:14-17) Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. {15} Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. {16} For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. {17} Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

(1 Cor 13:3) And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Title: Priming the Pump

A hiker was thirsty for a drink, but could not find water, until he came to an abandoned house. There he found a pump, and proceeded to pump with all the strength he had remaining. No water came forth. Then he saw a small jug with a cork at the top and a penciled note, directing that the water in the jug be poured into the pump to prime it. At first the thirsty man questioned this, but when he followed directions he obtained satisfying water. Before going his way, he filled the jug with water so the next thirsty person could secure water. He added to the note, "Believe me, it really works. You have to give it all away before you can get anything back."

Robert Schuller in telling this story reminds us of the principle stated by the Apostle Paul, "he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6).

-- Adapted from Tough Times Never Last

XVII. PHARISEE PASSING - (Luke 18:11-12) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. {12} I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

(Mat 5:20) For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Topic: Giving, Sacrificial

I just read some rather disappointing figures in the latest issue of Leadership, a journal for church leaders (Fall, 1989, p. 97). The average percentage of after-tax income given by U.S. Protestants to their churches in 1968 was 3.05%. The average percentage given in 1985 was 2.79%.

Title: Let Us Not Give Thanks

The Kiplinger Washington letter reports that religious contributions are flat, even though the pews are packed. Episcopalians give the most: \$640 per member per year. After that are Assemblies of God, \$625; Presbyterians, \$610; Baptists, \$545; Mormons, \$525; Jews \$510; Lutherans, \$410; Methodists, \$380; and Catholics, \$160.

-- Worth Magazine, September 1995, p. 63. NORTHSIDE - \$700

XVIII. PROGRESSIVE - (2 Cor 8:5-7) And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. {6} Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. {7} Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

Topic: Giving, Sacrificial

According to a Gallup survey, almost half the total charitable contributions in the United States come from households with incomes of less than \$30,000. -- Reported in The Other Side

XIX. PENSION PREPARING - (Mat 19:21) Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. (Luke 12:33-34) Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. {34} For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Topic: Giving, To God / Money

\$1.00 spent for lunch lasts five hours.

\$1.00 spent for a necktie lasts five weeks.

\$1.00 spent for a cap last five months.

\$1.00 spent for an auto lasts five years.

\$1.00 spent for a railroad lasts five decades.

\$1.00 spent in God's services lasts for eternity. -- Roger W. Babson

XX. PUNISHABLE - (Mat 16:25-26) For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. {26} For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Title: The Devil's Reason for Not Tithing

In January because of Christmas bills due.

In February because of fuel bills and car upkeep.

In March because of income taxes.

In April because of clothes for Easter.

In May because too much rain threatens the crops.

In June because too little rain threatens the crops.

In July because of vacation expenses coming up.

In August because of vacation expenses to be paid.

In September because of the children's school needs.

In October because of winter clothes and doctor bills.

In November because of the Thanksgiving trip.

In December because of the Christmas shopping.