

Living with Generosity: *Why are Good Works, Offering, Gifts and Sacrifices so important to God?*

Christians are called to reflect the amazing goodness of God through their love, generosity and good works toward others. Jesus was known for His good works. We are called to good works through our giving. Generosity and goodness are the natural response of a grateful heart. Sacrificial giving is a beautiful and practical expression of devotion and consecration toward God. It is birthed in our understanding of the greater sacrifice given by God in the life and death of His Holy Son. We are called to live life with open hands and open hearts. This is the way of the Kingdom of God.

To live without giving of our possessions and ourselves is to live in contradiction to the life God has modeled and what He expects of His children. Freely we have received every blessing from God and we are to freely give from the abundance of those blessings. In the Old Covenant all the animals and harvest was God's possession but God called for a sacrifice of obedience by offering one tenth of it all. This tenth portion or tithe was God's portion and was not to be used for common purposes but was consecrated to God. In the New Testament, Jesus becomes the model for Christ-followers in the areas of giving and generosity. His teachings challenged the thinking and practices of the devoted. We have been bought with a great price and we are not our own any longer. The blessings of God flow in the lives of His children who have given Him dominion over their finances, possessions, values and their very lives. This is how we demonstrate the Lordship of Christ in our lives.

The greatest reward for living this way is to be in harmony, alignment and life flow with God. As God our Father has demonstrated great generosity, in doing the same we become like Him. Therefore as the governor of our own lives, we each have opportunity to invest in the things that matter to the Father. As we invest in our Father's priorities, our account and our influence in the Kingdom increase. In wisdom, we lay up treasure in Heaven. As governors of our own lives, we have at our disposal the gifts of our time, our talents, our hearts, our efforts and our resources.

"The Tithe serves as a baseline for demonstrating ownership, obedience and New Covenant Generosity"

We are to live with generosity at our core because our Father is generous. But what does generosity look like? In the "Sermon on the Mount" Mt. 5-7, Jesus taught that the Laws of God in the Old Covenant are exceeded yet redefined by those who will live according to their devotion to the Kingdom of God in the New Covenant. Instead of hating our enemies who have wronged us, we are to do good toward them and to serve them by going the extra mile. We believe the tithe still belongs to God and is to be invested in the community of faith where a believer fellowships. The tithe demonstrates obedience and Lordship but is not an expression of generosity. We can only be generous with what is at our disposal. The tithe belongs to God and our obedience is well pleasing to God. For every believer who desires to demonstrate generosity in their finances, that shall be expressed with gifts that exceed the tithe. God loves it when we do good and are generous givers. With such sacrifices He is well pleased. Our desire is for every person in Radiant Church to experience the blessing of God to the fullest extent and live in alignment to the will of God in every area of their lives. It is never acceptable that God's people would not be generous in good works and offerings. Generosity is one of the markers upon the life of a follower of Christ.

The Makings of a Beautiful Offering of our Treasures, Time and Talents.

- 1 Co 4:2 it is required of stewards that they be found faithful
- We are to guard our hearts from giving or doing good in order to be noticed by people.
- Luke. 12:33 By giving sacrificially to the poor, we lay up treasures in heaven.
- Luke 10:29,30 Big sacrifices are reasonable, noticed and rewarded –Jesus noticed the sacrifice of the poor woman who gave it all and of the wealthy woman who ministered worship as she gave a gift of pure nard.
- Mt. 25 Our high touch offerings of compassion toward Christians are highly esteemed by the Lord
- 2 Co. 8:2 Offerings given in hardship with joy are commended by God.
- He who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly.
- We must not give grudgingly or under compulsion. We should make sure our gifts are not affected by covetousness, fear or selfishness. God loves a cheerful giver whose gift comes from the heart.
- We are to be in harmony with man and God as we give our gifts. Repent and be reconciled then give the gift.
- Proverbs 3:9-10 amp ⁹Honor the Lord with your capital *and* sufficiency [from righteous labors] and with the firstfruits of all your income;¹⁰ So shall your storage places be filled with plenty, and your vats shall be overflowing with new wine.
- Luke 6:38(NLT) ³⁸Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap.