

# What Are Our Motives For Giving?

## Giving in carnal un-God-like ways

Sadly, there is much carnal worldly teaching in the Church these days suggesting we should primarily give to needy people and needy ministries so we can receive back far more finance and earthly blessings in return. It is true that as a result of our giving, God can graciously give us many material blessings and people can repay us back in future times for our previous generous giving when they may be much improved financially. They may give us exceedingly more than we gave them originally.

But to teach believers they should be generous givers primarily so they can receive greater amounts in return, is to teach them to be *carnal self-centred* individuals who operate primarily by *ulterior motives*. Those who teach such worldly attitudes usually have a *poor understanding of God's character*. For example, they usually believe God only gives to those who give things to Him. In other words, they think God operates by the same selfish principles upon which they sometimes base their relationship to Him and others.

But note in Luke 6:34-36, Jesus reveals God's true character and how we should give to others: ***“And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be the sons of the Highest. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”*** Here we see God is *kind* to the *unthankful* and *evil*.

Because of God's kind, gracious and loving heart, He gives even to those He knows will give Him no thanks or show no gratitude in their words or actions in return. Also, He kindly gives to evil selfish people. Such people reject Him and hate His ways and commands, but He still is very kind or generous to them.

In Matthew 5:44-45, Christ refers to God's generous giving of earthly blessings to evil unrighteous people: ***“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”*** Note God gives earthly blessings by His grace not just to the just – those who are justified by faith.

In Acts 14:16-17, Paul taught God did good and gave generously to all nations in previous times despite the fact they walked in their own sinful selfish ways: ***“who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”*** So God does not operate by the principle of being generous only to those people who love Him, give to Him and are generous with others.

## Giving from love or Pharisaic religiosity

In Matthew 22:37-40, we see that everything believers do should be based on *love* for God and others. In Luke 11:42, Jesus Christ strongly rebuked many of the Pharisees for giving

to God without a primary emphasis on love: ***“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”***

Tragically, much modern giving in the Church has degenerated into a form of *dead religiosity* like these Pharisees practiced. This is because too much of today’s giving is done primarily for motives other than love for God and for others.

Many churchgoers give mainly in order to try to obtain greater financial blessings for themselves than the amounts they give. If such people thought that they would not receive more earthly riches in return than what they give, they would cut their giving back. They are like the Pharisees. Luke 16:14 says that the Pharisees ***“were lovers of money”***. In 2 Timothy 3:1-6, Paul prophesied about people in the last days who would ***“hold a form of godliness”*** and ***“be lovers of money”***.

In 2 Corinthians 8:8 and 24, Paul emphasised that our giving must be done out of *love*. If you have given for wrong primary motives in the past, it *is* never too late to turn from your sin.

## **Compare Spirit-filled Paul to many salesman-type television preachers**

Paul’s words in Acts 20:33-35 are a clear indication of a truly Spirit-filled heart: ***“I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’.”*** Paul here emphasised it is far more blessed to be a giver to others and to God than to receive from others or God.

Note how different Paul was from some salesmen-type television preachers who constantly lecture others about giving to “God’s” work with an unstated aim of getting money for their own wealthy lifestyles and religious empires. Paul had no strong desire to obtain money and possessions from other Christians. Paul felt so strongly about this that sometimes he even did some manual work in order to not need as much monetary support from other believers. Acts 20:35 and 18:3 show this.

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:7-23, preachers have the God-given right to be supported by God primarily through the members of their churches. But Paul was such a *giving person* that at times he did not use this right because he *preferred to see others being blessed*. This is the *true Spirit of Jesus Christ* operating through His people.

If we are being generous to others or towards the work of God because we are so eager for riches from Him, 1 Timothy 6:6-10 and Matthew 6:19-21 reveal we are operating from *sinful motives* and will probably *ruin* our *faith*. Proverbs 28:20 reveals we will sooner or later be disciplined or punished by God for such attitudes: ***“A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.”***

How contrary this is to the imbalanced hyper-prosperity version of Biblical prosperity presented by some teachers. Such leaders have turned *godliness* into a *means of financial gain* similar to the false teachers Paul opposed in 1 Timothy 6:5: ***“useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.”*** Do you try to use your godliness in the matter of giving as a means of attempted financial gain?

## **They really have little faith in God**

In Matthew 6:30-33, Jesus instructed: *“Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* Jesus Christ stresses here that people who emphasise more about the fulfilment of their physical needs than on the manifestation of God’s rule and righteousness in their own lives and in the lives of others are people of *little faith*.

I sometimes meet Christians whose primary concern in life is believing and confessing that God will prosper them and meet their needs. They boast about their so-called “great faith”. But the truth is their faith is *very small* and is *centred around self*, with Jesus Christ being more like their Santa Claus than their Lord. True faith involves surrender to the Lord and His will and seeking His kingdom and not our own.

God will meet our needs as Philippians 4:19 promises. But He is more concerned about us loving, trusting, surrendering to and obeying Him.

We cannot blame only certain preachers and teachers for the spread in the Church of these carnal self-centred attitudes to giving to God and to others. It is only because there are multiplied thousands of carnal worldly churchgoers with little faith living in America and other countries that a big “market” for these carnal itching-ear teachings has been created (see Paul’s prophecies in 2 Timothy 4:3). If these churchgoers would *grow up* in the Lord, there would be no demand for the services, books and tapes of those who *“peddle the Word of God”* (see 2 Corinthians 2:17) and teach that godliness is mainly a means of financial gain (see 1 Timothy 6:5).

## **The good and bad effects of tax deductions on giving**

Americans obtain a tax deduction for giving donations to their churches and television preachers. In one sense, this is good in that it helps American churches to have finances for God’s work. But in another sense, it is bad. This is because it encourages an attitude of, “I will give primarily in order to receive benefits in return.” This type of attitude permeates so much of modern American Christianity and preaching.

## **Itching ears supporting the greed-based teachings**

I often used to wonder why so many Christians follow the self-centred, greed-based Biblically imbalanced teachings of certain preachers. This was until I saw Paul’s prophecy in 2 Timothy 4:2-4: *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”*

In the above verses, Paul commanded leaders to preach the Word, rebuke, correct and teach well in order to lay strong foundations for the future time when many churchgoers would support the ministries of those who taught them what agreed with their own greedy desires.

In Greek, the word “*desires*” in 2 Timothy 4:3 above is “*epithumia*” – the same word used in Romans 13:14, Galatians 5:16, 5:24, Ephesians 2:3, 2 Peter 2:18 and 1 John 2:16 for the lusts or evil desires of the flesh. 1 Peter 1:13-14, 2:11-12 and Titus 2:11-12 teach believers to avoid greedy desires or lusts.

## **Copying the sins of past eras and ignoring God’s warnings**

Some American television preachers say that if you send them a certain sized offering, then they will have faith that you will miraculously receive whatever you want from God, no matter what. They guarantee He will grant such requests.

Such worldly religious nonsense as above involves the sin of trying to bribe God (see Deuteronomy 10:17), the sin of trying to peddle the Word for profit – something Paul condemned (see 2 Corinthians 2:17) and trying to sell God’s miracles for profit, a sin in which Gehazi and Simon the sorcerer engaged.

Gehazi was the prophet Elisha’s servant. After being used of the Lord to heal the Syrian Naaman of the dreadful disease of leprosy, Elisha refused to receive any money offering for this (see 2 Kings 5:1-16). Elisha had a righteous heart of *integrity*. He would not allow others to pay for miracles. 2 Kings 5:16 records Elisha’s response to Naaman’s desire to give him an offering: ***“But he said, ‘As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing.’ And he urged him to take it, but he refused.”***

Compare this to the greedy heart of Gehazi, who later pursued Naaman and obtained two talents of silver and two changes of clothes from him. 2 Kings 5:20-27 reveals God punished Gehazi with leprosy for his sinful actions in obtaining payments for God’s healing miracle. Often, a type of spiritual blindness comes across those who teach God’s miracles can be purchased by giving financial offerings to Him through His ministers.

God holds those who teach that His miracles could be bought by a combination of money offerings and supposed “faith” more responsible than the new believers who are taught such things. Note God punished Gehazi and did not punish Naaman who gave the money.

True faith gratefully receives God’s miracles as *free* gifts but does not try to earn or pay for them through faith itself and/or money offerings.

Note Peter strongly rebuked Simon the Sorcerer for trying to purchase God’s miracle-working power (see Acts 8:18-23).

Note 1 Corinthians 10:6 reveals God records the sins of people in the past as warnings to believers today: ***“Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.”***

## **Jesus’ attitudes to those using His house as a money-making business**

John 2:13-16 reveals Jesus Christ’s attitudes to those who use His Father’s house as a form of business and money-making: ***“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them***

*all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!'"*

I believe if Jesus was alive today, He would do the same on the television shows of some preachers.

## **But what about their miracles?**

You may say, "But the people who teach such things have many miracles in their ministries. These miracles must be proof God supports all they do and preach." But note the Judges 13:1-16:31 shows that Samson was used mightily and miraculously by the Holy Spirit, but was spiritually immature and foolish in many ways. Judges 16:1 reveals he had sex with a prostitute and Judges 16:4-20 shows he broke his Nazirite vow to God because of his attraction for a Philistine woman. God was displeased by Samson's behaviour in these matters.

Also, despite being justified by God and having *many miracles, revelations and manifestations of the Holy Spirit* among them, many of the Corinthian Christians were relatively very carnal and spiritual babes in Christ (see 1 Corinthians 1:4-5, 3:1-4, 5:1-13, 6:11, 11: 18-22, 11:27-34, 12:1-11 and 2 Corinthians 12:20-21). These relatively carnal spiritually immature Corinthians were *proud* of themselves (see 1 Corinthians 5:2 and 5:6) even though many of their ideas and practices were contrary to the Word of God.

Also observe the Word of God shows some of His ministries can be in a state of *backsliding* at the same time as giving marvellous prophecies from Him. Balaam is an example of this (see Numbers 22:1-24:25). 1 Samuel 19:1-24 shows Saul prophesied by the Holy Spirit even while he was backsliding and still intending to murder David.

In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus warned that some who have had marvellous ministries involving casting out demons, giving great prophecies and other wonders or miracles, will not be saved: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

I am not here saying that some of the American television evangelists will not be saved. I am not the Final Judge. Neither are you. Only God can judge such matters. All we can do is give Jesus' warning to His ministers and Church that not all great miracle-workers in the church will be saved.

The teachings and practices of many of these television preachers in the matter of finance and giving to God shows they are still *spiritual babes in Christ* in numerous areas of their lives. They masquerade as very mature believers who should lead the whole church worldwide. But they are not suitable for such leadership.

## **But why does God permit these preachers to influence His people?**

You may ask then, "Why does God allow these preachers to influence His people with such worldly religiosity?" Deuteronomy 13:1-3 reveals the answer: *"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or wonder, and the sign or the*

*wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods which you have not known, and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.'* God uses miracle-workers who teach unbiblical ideas and practices to test His people to see whether they fully love Him with all their hearts.

Some Pentecostals and Charismatics are like the people of Israel in the wilderness. They never learn the lessons God tries to teach them. God tried to teach the Pentecostal/Charismatic world a deep lesson about perversions of the Gospel through His public judgement of the P.T.L television ministry associated with Jim and Tammy Bakker in the 1980's. God publicly exposed to the world the extreme materialism and focus on self of the P.T.L's perversion of true Biblical teaching on prosperity. Secret sins were shouted from the roof tops.

A similar thing happened in Israel after David committed adultery and murder. God used the prophet Nathan to bring David's hidden sin out into the open (see 2 Samuel 12:1-14). 2 Samuel 12:14 shows David's sin resulted in the people of the world speaking evil against God.

At the time the P.T.L scandal and fiasco became public, the Lord was calling all other television, radio and ordinary evangelists and pastors, who operated under similar worldly principles and who preached a similar Biblically imbalanced Gospel, to *repent*. But sadly, only a small number did. The others *glossed* over the P.T.L fiasco, claiming their ministries and version of the Gospel were not associated with any of the P.T.L problems. Others *whitewashed* the situation saying the P.T.L television show preached the right things, but Jimmy Bakker's adultery and a few minor things were the only real problems.

This was a lost opportunity for many of our fellow Pentecostals and Charismatics, similar to when many Judeans in the time of godly King Josiah, only *superficially* turned from their sins after God used Josiah to fervently call the nation to turn from their sins back to God (see 1 Kings 22:1-23:30, Zephaniah 1:1-3:20 and Jeremiah 3:6-6:30). Jeremiah 25:2-3 records God's Word: "*which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying: 'From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the Lord has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened.'*"

## **God does not want gifts of money obtained wickedly**

In Deuteronomy 23:17-18, God commanded the Israelites: "*There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of God for any avowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God.*"

In this verse, God said He abhorred the practice of people giving offerings to Him which were the money or items wickedly earned by harlots – female prostitutes – and dogs – symbolising male cult homosexual prostitutes<sup>1</sup> or "*a perverted one*".

In God's eyes, money and possessions earned by prostitution were evil and could not be transformed into "holy gifts to God" or symbolic representations of devotion to and love for

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, Driver and Briggs, pages 476-477 and Green, page 111.

Him. Similarly, God regards as abominations the money spent on their own ministries by these church leaders who obtain offerings from churchgoers through sinful or deceptive means.

## **Some Pentecostals imitating the errors of Catholic indulgences**

One of the great tragedies of recent decades is how many modern Pentecostal churchgoers have been led into some very “religious” legalistic attitudes to earthly blessings from God. The main advocates of such teachings have been some of the American television preachers, who instead of truly trusting God to supply their needs, have mixed secular marketing and advertising techniques with Biblical teaching on giving, money, prosperity and rewards. They have done this in order to keep millions of dollars flowing in to keep their religious empires going.

These preachers have done research and found that *Christians tend to give more when they are promised some deserved reward supposedly from God in return for their giving*. They have corrupted the Biblical teaching on earthly blessings from God into being a form of the secular marketing promotions approach of “send in only \$49.99 to us to purchase your new...and be in the drawer for a new car.” The main difference is these preachers have *guaranteed God will give everyone the first prize if they follow the right techniques* – one of these being sending these ministers some money, the more the better.

While some of these television ministers are sincere hardworking people who think they are doing what is right, they have sadly introduced a system which outwardly is very appealing to the flesh of many pastors because it results in much money being given for church projects. This is similar to how the Roman Catholic *indulgence system, lotteries and bingo nights* have financed the building of many Catholic schools and churches over the years.

Churches who operate by this new religious system appear outwardly to be blessed greatly by God for operating by these mixtures of worldly and Biblical principles. Similarly, Catholic indulgence preachers in Martin Luther’s time also seemed to have their unbiblical legalistic practices sanctioned by God on the same basis. Many gullible churchgoers regarded the massive amounts of money which were given by churchgoers to the indulgence preachers after the latter offered rewards from God for generous giving, as undeniable proof He approved of what these preachers were doing.

These naïve churchgoers probably imagined that the *success and prosperity* of the *indulgence preachers* in obtaining money for the dream or vision of God’s supposedly “anointed” leaders of building Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome was evidence that the Holy Spirit was behind the commercialised purchasing of one’s relatives out of purgatory. Multiplied thousands of gullible churchgoers were deceived by this seemingly “holy” crusade aimed at saving others from suffering in Purgatory – a place which actually does not even exist. Tragically, these deceived churchgoers were sure that their anointed church leaders would not lead them into practices which were contrary to God’s will.

## **Pastors staying at \$600 a day penthouses**

Another perversion of the Biblical teaching of prosperity involves pastors regularly staying in the most expensive penthouses of first class hotels at the expense of their congregations. In 2004 in Sydney in Australia, such hotel rooms can cost roughly \$450 to \$600

a day or over \$2,000 a week depending on what time of the year. This practice began years ago among some of the wealthy American television preachers. But in recent years, it has spread to the pastors of some large churches in large cities throughout the world. The pastors who do the above believe they are exercising faith for prosperity by staying at such expensive hotel rooms. They believe pastors who do not follow their example lack faith and have an ascetic attitude to money.

Such pastors are *spiritually “abusing”* their congregations by doing such things. Often many of the working class people and widows in their congregations have very small incomes and give 10% or more of their incomes. But their pastors live like the rich man in Jesus’ parable in Luke 16:19-26 and love money like the Pharisees did (see Luke 16:14).

1 Timothy 5:16 and James 1:27 command the church to look after its widows. In 1 Timothy 5:16, Paul says: **“If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”** Something is very wrong when some leaders are living like Hollywood movie stars and the widows in their churches are in great financial need.

Some brainwashed, money-loving “know-it-all” will say, “But if these widows gave tithes and offerings according to the ‘laws of prosperity’ preached by Brother Wealthy and Sister Money, they will also become financially rich and will not need any support from the Church. God will reward their good works and faith.” Such comments are typical of the simplistic legalism now being preached by some Biblical dinosaurs.

God promises to supply the needs of all Christians including widows through His undeserved grace through Christ (see Philippians 4:19). But part of God’s fulfilling Philippians 4:19 involves the Church and/or its individual members helping widows.

God has promised to supply Christian widows’ needs but not necessarily to make them all millionaires. God has prospered some Christian widows with great wealth. But as 1 Corinthians 16:2 reveals, God’s prosperity varies from *believer* to *believer* and sometimes from *week* to *week*.

These big spenders of tithes and offerings fail to realise this money was given primarily to God and only in a delegated sense to them as His stewards. Luke 16:1-13 shows Jesus will ask every steward to give an account of what He permitted to pass through their hands.