

GOD'S WORDS TO STRENGTHEN OUR GRASP ON GRACE GIVING

Jesus talked more about money than He did prayer, heaven or hell. Why? Because He said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

Giving is a heart issue that gets to the core of what we believe and what we want to become.

In MICC, we believe that giving is an act of worship, as we learn to respond in a very tangible way to the incredible generosity of God. We give from our hearts in recognition that God owns everything, and we are to be faithful stewards of all he entrusts to us.

Here are four foundational principles to embrace:

1. *Every believer has a responsibility to support his or her home church financially.* (Malachi 3:8-10; 1 Corinthians 9:7-12; 1 Timothy 5:17-18) Even in a temporary home church environment like MICC this is true. The MICC of 2009 is growing and serving and benefiting from the generous and sacrificial gifts of those who were in MICC in past years. Your faithful giving will make possible a continuing fruitful ministry to supply the church of 2010 and beyond.

2. *At the start, we don't need to pray about giving.* Here's what this means: we don't pray and ask God if we should do something that he's already commanded. We can consider the biblical guideline of the tithe (10% of one's income) as a helpful **starting point** for learning how to give. (Genesis 14:18-20; Malachi 3:8-10; Matthew 23:23)

3. *Every believer can give biblically, regardless of income.* The amount is not as important as the heart as one gives... regularly, proportionally, generously, sacrificially and cheerfully. (Matthew 6:21; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9)

4. *Every healthy believer and church will go through seasons of sacrificial giving,* above and beyond regular giving, to provide for special needs and opportunities. (Exodus 35:4-36:7; Acts 11:27-30).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REQUIRE?

Here's a list of biblical descriptions of our giving. These words don't reflect a stingy, foot-dragging heart, but one that is grateful and growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Cheerfully (2 Cor 9:7)
Regularly (1 Cor 16:2)
Generously (2 Cor 8:2; 9:6,11)
Proportionally (1 Cor 16:2)
Gratefully (2 Cor 9:15)
Expectantly (2 Cor 9:11)
Willingly (2 Cor 8:3; 9:5)

To obey like Jesus involves a recognition of and repentance from the opposite pattern of giving:

Begrudgingly
Intermittently
Miserly
Disproportionately
Selfishly
Non-expectantly
Reluctantly

Our giving is an objective measure of our spiritual condition. As elders, our primary concern is for your hearts. Remember, we want something for you, not from you! When Christ is prized in the heart then joyful, faithful, fruitful obedience follows. Your fresh affection for Christ has amazing power to drive out affection for smaller things.

FINALLY, REMEMBER THIS

The way to freedom is not in calculation but in meditation. Don't just sit down with your accounts and calculate your obedience. Rather, consider the Gospel: look at what Christ has done.

Don't do this with a debtor mentality, trying to repay him for his infinite sacrifice, but see him as the great and glorious example of one who is giving with freedom, joy, abundance, grace, eternal perspective, and love.

MUNICH INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

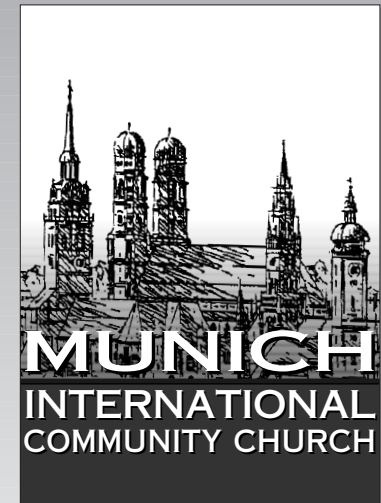
SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 4:00 PM

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WHY WE GIVE TO MICC

GLORIFYING CHRIST
PLANNING TO WORSHIP
GROWING IN JOYFUL OBEDIENCE



WHY DO WE GIVE TO MICC?

The Bible indicates that giving is an act of worship. For believers, this means that we should give faithfully to our local church. If you are a believer and come to church at MICC and you are not giving, you are not sharing in the life of the community, but are taking from the community. God says that is robbing *him*: robbing him of glory, plundering his reputation and resources.

That's rather blunt, but it's true, and spoken in loving concern.

Sometimes people say, "MICC doesn't need what I have to give—the church has enough already." To that comment, we can answer that we would be in desperate need if everyone shared that perspective, and we also can ask, "How much more could we plan and choose to do as wise stewards if all the saints in MICC were generously giving?"

If you are not a Christian, we're not putting pressure on you to give—that's the privilege and responsibility of the Christians here. But we want you to seek to deal first with the larger issue: your devotion to empty pursuits, and your running from God (what the Bible calls sin) and Jesus' forgiveness of that sin.

We are not as concerned about the amount people give, but rather about the number of people who are giving. God is building His kingdom through the church, and He asks that all believers share in this joyous responsibility. This mission is bigger than just a few of us and takes everyone's effort and faithfulness; no matter if you are a college student who can give only 10 a month or a millionaire who can give thousands.

WHO OWNS MY PERSONAL STUFF?

This is an important and top priority question. Very simply, everything you and I have comes from God. Our money is God's provision and a tool we can use to worship Him by giving to the church (to spread God's fame in the gospel throughout Munich and around the world), by providing for our families and by enjoying God and the grace that He gives us.

You may have a lot or you may have a little, but the priority question for each of us is this: *am I worshipping God with "my" stuff?* and the next priority question is: *do the priorities of my personal spending reveal a heart that is fully devoted to Christ?*

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REALLY SAY?

Here are ten biblical perspectives to keep in mind. Since we know we are only temporary residents of this world, and we know what the future holds, we can afford to be eager and generous now!

1. We have an abundance (1 Cor 4:7; Rom 8:32; 1 Tim 6:17)
2. We are managers not owners (Lev 25:23; Ps 24:1; Luke 16:1)
3. Money gains a grip on the heart (Luke 12:15)
4. That grip can be broken by giving it away (Luke 12:32-34)
5. Our currency is rotting (1 John 2:17; Matt 6:19-21)
6. In Jesus Christ, we have a better possession and an abiding one (Heb 10:32-36)
7. Delaying joyful obedience will not help (2 Cor 9:7)
8. Withholding from God is robbery (Malachi 3:9-10)
9. A clear mark of growing and genuine Christianity is radical generosity (2 Cor 9:6-15)
10. Significant spiritual growth is impossible unless we deal with this. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt 6:21)

SHOULD I GIVE ALL OF MY GIFTS TO MICC?

No, this is not required. Sometimes people refer to Malachi 3:8-10—"bring the whole tithe into the storehouse." Yet Israel as a nation was a relatively small and theocratic system, the poor were assisted through giving and gleaning, it was an agrarian economy. So, there was single treasury—a single place to give, and from that single source, all was distributed.

The problem churches face is not that people don't give to the church. *Rather, the problem is that people don't give at all:* with biblical proportionality, freedom, generosity and joy.

Each week we offer gifts in worship to God. The decision to give really shouldn't take place in church when the basket is passed. This decision should happen at home as you make a commitment to regular, systematic, proportional and cheerful giving. Giving is an expression of planned worship coming from a heart of gratitude and faith toward God.

By the way, only about 15% of our gifts are received on Sunday in the basket. The vast majority of our givers do it through regular bank transfers or a standing order/draft. That's a sign of planned worship.

DO I GIVE 10%? IS THAT ENOUGH?

The New Testament doesn't give us a percentage. 10% is considered a baseline. In the Old Testament, the tithe was actually 20% and more! The question to consider is this: we have received greater privileges, greater promises, enjoy greater blessing, so why should we give less than Old Testament saints? Don't be a legalist; don't regard God as a creditor coming to collect his due. He is our loving heavenly Father who has blessed us with an abundance, and tests the condition and direction of our hearts (Matt. 6:21) by our generosity.

CAN'T I TITHE MY TIME INSTEAD?

Time, along with our talents, relationships, service and God's truth, is but *one* aspect of our stewardship. Be careful of trying to bargain with God in these areas. Imitate God's generosity. Keep in mind that a "tithe" of a whole week is 16.8 hours per week!

WHAT IF MY HEART SAYS YES, BUT MY ACCOUNT BALANCE SAYS NO?

It is far better for you to have the desire to repent and change rather than the thought that this is all so unreasonable, and to treat God with less honor than you treat the tax man.

With a prayerful, repentant heart, confess to God that it is difficult for you to trust him. Then, ask him to increase your freedom, love and joy as you begin to give your life away to him and to others, and share more generously of what he has provided. Repentance, faith, and obedience are all components of our actions.

Don't just give grudgingly, indifferent to your attitude. Don't continue to disobey, using your sinful attitude as an excuse: "I won't give until I can give cheerfully!" Begin to give with a humble and repentant attitude and watch God work.

What if you received news of a 15% pay cut for the next year. What would you do? You probably would grit your teeth and "make it somehow." Why not give yourself an opportunity to become a happy philanthropist today? The Holy Spirit is moving in us all to move us one more step today toward full, joyful, generous obedience.

WHAT IF I'M HERE IN MUNICH FOR ONLY A SHORT TIME

MICC has always existed because of the financial support of people who are here for a short time. Small or large, but cheerful, faithful, proportional giving. You are enjoying what is here in MICC because of the faithfulness of others who were here only a year or two in the past. My encouragement to you: cheerfully make it possible for others to benefit from your generosity after you have gone.