

Word of Life Lutheran Brethren Church
Community Group Bible Study #8
Godly giving.

Open with prayer as you begin. Pray specifically for the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind in order to understand God's Word.

Does anyone like to pay taxes? Do you remember the first time you received a paycheck and asked the question “Who’s this FICA guy and why did he take so much of my money?!”

We’re not going to discuss the rights or wrongs of taxes, or who deserves a cut and who should or should not be paying more. The law tells us how much we must pay, and we are forced to pay it. That’s how the world works. But does God work this way? Have you ever felt like writing a check to the church was like paying a tax? Does God look like the IRS? **When we are motivated by the Law rather than the Gospel, giving becomes a duty and can never really be done joyfully.**

So why do we give? Isn’t it more important to love God than to give God my money? If God is so powerful, why does He want my money? Have you ever heard these questions? Have you asked them? **I think most of us have wondered why we give to a God who has no needs. We do need to be honest about our attitudes if we’re going to be able to repent and deal with our wrong beliefs.**

This week we’re obviously going to talk about money. ***Put your wallet away and close your checkbook.*** We will not pass the plate or ask for pledges at the end of this lesson.

We need to recognize that giving is a part of worship. In last week’s Community Group lesson and sermon we talked about worship and how our very lives are to be “living sacrifices” and how worship permeates every aspect of our lives and is truly what we were created for.

What does your budget reveal about what you value? When you plan your budget, what things get first priority?

Where does your wealth come from? How do you acquire money? **We work hard or invest wisely. But ultimately who gave us the ability to work hard? Who gave us the intellect to invest wisely? See James 1:17**

Does God “need” your money? Read Psalm 50:9-12

If all that is in the world belongs to God, than whose money do you have in your wallet? If we really understood that our wealth was not our own how might that change how we use it?

Does anyone know what a steward is? Does he own anything or keep anything for himself? A steward was servant who was put in charge of his master’s estate. Joseph was a steward in Potiphar’s home (see Gen. 39:1-6). We are stewards, and God is our master. This was the way Jesus understood wealth and was the starting point for all His teachings about money.

Word of Life Lutheran Brethren Church
Community Group Bible Study #8
Godly giving.

In Matt 25, Jesus told a parable about a man who went away on a journey and entrusted three servants with portions of his wealth (calculated in talents). In the New Testament, a talent weight is calculated at 58 to 80 lbs. The value would differ according to the metal, but the buying power was enormous. Five talents would make one a multi-millionaire.¹ Read Matt 25:14-30.

Even our language has transformed “talent” into a description of our abilities. It’s easy to recognize our abilities as a gift from God, but do we recognize our wealth as a gift from God? What does this parable teach about our use of God’s wealth?

If our giving is part of worship, what might your budget reveal about what or who you are worshipping?

Some Christians use the OT tithe as a guide for giving. A tithe is 10%, but there were several tithes required of the citizens of the nation of Israel, along with other temple taxes. All told the people of Israel were required to give over a quarter of their gross income to the temple. Israel was both church and state, and the taxes that they owed to the king would be in addition to the “tithes” owed to the temple. Anyone still want to go back to the Law? The NT references to tithing are generally negative. Jesus talks about the Pharisees obeying the letter of the law by tithing their spices, while neglecting the spirit of the Law by ignoring widows and their needs! (Matt 23:23; Luke 11:42)

If we go back to the OT tithe we are returning to the Law. Paul addresses this return to the Law in Galatians 3:10. A church that uses the Law to motivate Christians to give is putting them under a curse! We are taught to give freely and with a cheerful heart (2 Cor 9:7). So if the Law is not our motivation to give, what is?

How does the Gospel motivate you?

God has given us everything. He went so far as to give us His Son. He is still giving to us today. The old hymn line reminds us “We give Thee but Thine own.”

The wealth we possess exists for God’s glory, not our own. We worship God with all that we do, all that we are and all that we have. May we use our time, treasures and talents to His honor and glory.

Close in prayer. Pray specifically that we would be good stewards of God’s “stuff”.

¹Swanson, James ; Nave, Orville: *New Nave's*. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, 1994