

GIVING FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Sunday School Leader's Guide – Lesson Two



How to Give an Amount That Matters

Lesson Goal:

To see our financial giving from God's perspective.

Our gifts can please God and delight His heart. He notices! The Bible calls these kinds of gifts “acceptable”, and also clearly shows that other gifts can be un-acceptable. This is a very important concept, but often overlooked in teaching about giving. The very point of a gift is to delight the recipient.

Before The Lesson:

Read the book *Plastic Donuts* for background, and note any highlights you may want to share from chapters 4-6. Also review the companion Guide, and complete the work for Truth #2 and #3.

Again, there may be more material for the class time available. Review this lesson outline and highlight which elements best fit your class discussion, and cross out areas as needed. Leave room at the end of class to discuss homework in the Guide.

Key Points From Last Week - Review:

- God notices my gifts in a personal way – Like a Father receives a gift from a child
- Some gifts are acceptable to God, while others are not
- When we give to God, the amount matters (Acceptable Gift Truth #1)

Today we will introduce Truth #2: **We Determine the Amount**
And Truth #3: **We Give According To Our Ability**

GIVING FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Sunday School Leader's Guide – Lesson Two



How to Give an Amount That Matters (continued)

? Ask:

Have various individuals from the group share.

- When you purchase a gift for someone close to you – how do you know how much to spend?
- Which would be more difficult – to buy a meaningful gift for someone you know very well or to purchase a meaningful gift for someone you just met?
- When it comes to receiving gifts – would you rather just tell someone exactly what you want or would you prefer to receive a gift that was a thoughtful surprise, a perfect fit, and showed that you mattered because they spent time and effort to purchase it?

📖 Examine the Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

⚠️ Read this passage, or have someone else read it.

? Ask:

- According to these verses, who determined the amount?
- How much, or what, were they to bring?

From this passage we can clearly see that God is looking forward to an offering – He commanded them to give, but He did not determine the amount. In fact He said the givers are to give as they are able.

Key Point: Acceptable Gift Truth #2

We Determine the Amount

Unlike the IRS, your mortgage company, or your utility company God does not set a price, a fee, an amount, or a formula for our giving. We find this truth all throughout both the Old Testament and the New Testament. According to God's Word, giving is much more about a personal relationship. That's good news!

GIVING FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Sunday School Leader's Guide – Lesson Two



How to Give an Amount That Matters (continued)

Illustration:

When my wife's birthday comes each year I have two choices. I can take the easy road, ask her what she wants, go purchase it, wrap it up and give it to her. When she opens it she is not really surprised, maybe somewhat thankful, but after all I did just what she asked and nothing more.

On the other hand, I could pay attention in the weeks leading up to her birthday. I could listen for hints. I should know her heart, her likes and dislikes, her tastes and her preferences. Based on all that knowledge, I can seek out an acceptable and appropriate gift. When the day arrives, she will open this gift that has been selected by me. A gift that says I know what you like, I chose this just for you, I spent a significant amount of time and resources to purchase this gift. Her response will be delight, excitement, and joy because my gift conveys that I care.

You see when I choose the gift it has meaning and significance. When I buy what she requested I have merely fulfilled an obligation.

? Ask:

Which type of gift do you think God is seeking from us? The gift where He determines the amount and we simply write the check? Or, the gift where we get to know Him, listen for His promptings and understand His heart and give something acceptable?

📖 Examine the Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 9:7

? Ask:

- According to this verse, who determined the amount?
- How much were they to bring?
- Does this concept surprise you? Trouble you?

Key Point:

This is only one of many instances where the Bible teaches us that we determine the amount. Paul says, you decide, as your purpose in your heart, the amount to give in this offering.

This may seem foreign to you, strange to you, or even make you feel uncomfortable because we want to be told what the expectation is for a meaningful gift. We want to say, "Just tell me what I am supposed to do and I will do it." But God wants our heart, our attention, and our focus more than He desires a financial gift from our pocketbook. So He says, "You decide, you think through it, you determine what you will bring Me for a gift."

GIVING FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Sunday School Leader's Guide – Lesson Two



How to Give an Amount That Matters (continued)

In the area of financial gifts, God's Word shows that He gives us a surprising lack of formulas or percentages - and a surprising level of freedom and responsibility in giving an acceptable gift. His Word clearly teaches us that we determine the amount in seeking to give an amount that matters.

Our human nature really wants to be given a standard, a goal, a desired outcome that we invest our efforts and resources into achieving. In sports, we train to cross the finish line, to break records, to achieve goals often set by others.

In school, we want to know the "right answer." So our nature also desires that we have Biblical standards that we can work toward and achieve.

We want a rule to follow so we can check it off the list when complete. Why?

Maybe because it allows us to feel like we have accomplished something, and maybe even pat ourselves on the back?

Consider Peter asking Jesus, "How many times must I forgive?" or the rich man inquiring, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Both wanted a specific A-B-C answer, yet Jesus gave neither such a way out.

Neither has God provided such a formula for us in financial giving. But there are clear guidelines that give us insight into giving from God's perspective.


He wants us to give from a relationship with Him as our Father. He wants the tension in the process of giving to engage us and lead us to Him.

Examine the Scriptures:

1 Kings 8:63 and Luke 19:8

Ask:

- Who determined the amount Solomon offered to God?
- Why do you suppose such a great amount?
- Why do you think Zaccheus chose to give 50%? Did Jesus tell him to? Is that a Biblical standard somewhere?

 Lead the discussion to help your class understand that neither God nor Jesus set these standards or told them how much to give. Solomon gave what he determined to be an acceptable gift for such a monumental moment of dedicating the temple. Zaccheus gave because his heart was moved by the salvation Jesus offered to him that day.

GIVING FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Sunday School Leader's Guide – Lesson Two



How to Give an Amount That Matters (continued)

Review:

- There are four ways gifts get God's attention
- As we learned last week, the amount does matter (Truth #1)
- And we just learned, we determine the amount (Truth #2)

? Ask:

- So how do you think “we determine” the amount of our gifts?
- How much is the right amount?

Key Point: Acceptable Gift Truth #3:

We Give According To Our Ability

📖 Examine the Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 8:11-12

? Ask:

- According to this verse, how do we determine the amount?
- What do you think that means?

Key Point:

“According to what one has,” simply means according to their ability.

God does not require us to give gifts that are beyond our ability. Neither does He expect us to give gifts that are below our ability to give. (Remember the story of John and the engagement ring from last week)

📖 Examine the Scriptures:

From Deuteronomy 16:17 we understand this principle was certainly an Old Testament standard. Here are some other references:

- Exodus 35:5
- Ezra 2:68-69
- Acts 11:29
- 2 Corinthians 8:3

GIVING FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Sunday School Leader's Guide – Lesson Two



How to Give an Amount That Matters (continued)

? Ask:

- Why do you think God leaves it so open ended? (He wants us to give from our relationship with Him. He wants us to give in response to knowing Him, loving Him, and desiring to bring delight to His heart. He wants us to offer acceptable gifts that bring Him joy and cause us to delight in delighting Him.)
- If the Biblical truth is, I am to give according to my ability – what is “my ability”? (Note: Reference the chart in the Guide for clarity)

Key Point:

When most people think “according to my ability” or “according to what one has,” they think of one primary ability – their income ability. But in reality we have multiple abilities from which we can give.

⚠ Discuss the two ability types below and challenge your participants to think how they might give an acceptable gift from each of these abilities.

Profit Ability:

This is our income ability. The profits or increase we have from the work of our hands or other sources of income that God blesses us with. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2, Ephesians 4:28)

Possession Ability:

God may prompt the heart to give a gift from the assets or the possessions that we own. Think of the children of Israel when they brought gold, silver, linen, and other possessions for the construction of the tabernacle. (Other examples: Luke 3:11, 19:8; Acts 2:45)

What are assets we might give from? (Investments, retirement accounts, automobiles, homes, savings accounts, or other assets)

GIVING FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Sunday School Leader's Guide – Lesson Two



Bringing It Home:

- Review Truth #1, from last week: “The Amount Matters”
- His Word clearly teaches us that we determine the amount. (Acceptable Gift Truth #2)
- It’s about a relationship with Him. You should sense great freedom in this relationship-based giving truth. You should also sense a great amount of responsibility as you seek to give an amount that truly matters to you.
- God expects me to give according to my ability (Acceptable Gift Truth #3)
- I have multiple abilities from which to give an acceptable gift

Next week:

- Complete Truth #2 and #3 in the Guide. Then read chapters 7-8 in *Plastic Donuts*.
 - For the “Donut” exercise in Truth #3, refer to sample answers and helps at www.AcceptableGift.org/MyDonuts
 - Take their time with each section
 - Talk over their impressions and ideas with their family
-