

Giving money to the Plant



The Plant is funded from two sources; giving from members of The Plant and the giving of supporters who don't come. In the past, we have also received money from various trust funds. Going forward, the only sustainable, and right, way for a church to be funded is by the giving of its members. The document below sets out what the Bible teaches about Christian giving. To keep this readable, we will give references to Bible passages, but not go into them in all their detail. If you want to read a fuller account of the biblical background for this article, there is a longer article based on 1 Chronicles chapter 29 on the website.

Why should I give money to Christian causes?

The work of telling the world about Jesus costs money. PA equipment costs money, paying staff costs money, Bibles cost money, sending missionaries abroad costs money. God has said in the Bible that his work should be paid for by the voluntary giving of his people. In 1 Chronicles 29 David encourages the people to give to pay for the Temple. That was the most urgent thing needed then. In Matthew 28, Jesus tells his followers to make disciples of all nations. This is the most urgent need now. The money for this comes from the same place – the voluntary giving of God's people.

This is not to say that God needs our money. You see, when we think like that we are getting things the wrong way round. It is not our money – it is God's money. Psalm 50:10-12 makes it quite clear that God owns everything in the world. After he and the people have given generously, David praises God in 1 Chronicles 29:14, saying 'But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you'. We only give to God what is his already, what he has given us to take care of. It is not our money – it is God's and we should use it in a way that glorifies him. This is a very sensible thing to do as well – we cannot take money with us when we die, but we will spend forever with God. What great joy and reward in spending money now to buy treasure in heaven rather than here where we cannot keep it! (See Luke 12:33-34)

How should I give?

2 Corinthians 8:8-9 is very helpful in answering this question. These verses say:

'I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.'

Paul isn't ordering the Corinthians to give, God wants people to give voluntarily. If they truly love Jesus – if they truly understand the grace that he has shown them in dying in their place – this will be evident in their giving. If we truly love Jesus then how can we do anything but follow his example? If the thought of God's grace to you in Jesus gives you joy then why not demonstrate the sincerity of your love by giving. If our model of giving is Jesus, we should give as he gave:

Deliberately

It was clear in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus did not want to die. And yet he deliberately set his face to go to Jerusalem to suffer and to die. None of us naturally (that is, in our sinful nature) really want to give our money away. Yet if we're to give as God gave, we will do so deliberately and systematically. That means we will plan our giving; and we will make sure it actually happens. Practical information on this is below.

Sacrificially

Giving hurt Jesus, so we ought to feel it pinch too! In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis wrote this: 'If our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities [giving] do not pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small.'

Graciously

Jesus' giving of himself was the ultimate case of an utterly undeserved gift. God didn't give us Jesus because we deserved him, or because he owed us anything. We are forever in God's debt – but he didn't give us his Son just so he'd have something over us. To give as God gives is to give 'open-handedly' – not

even thinking about what we might get in return. Having said that, there are all sorts of returns for our giving mentioned (in passing) in 2 Corinthians including other Christians' joy and prayer. That's because God's gracious giving doesn't stop – he doesn't 'repay' us as we give, he just showers even more of his grace upon us!

Cheerfully

God delights to bless us with his grace! And if we know God and love him, we will delight to give money to his glory! Giving generates joy because God is just so flipping marvellous!

How much should I give?

God gives two answers to this question – generously and willingly, and 100%. In the Old Testament there was a system of taxation to pay for the Temple, which averaged about 23% of an Israelite's income (not the 10% often quoted – that was only one of the taxes). However, we live with Jesus as our King and Temple, the place where we meet God. These tithe-taxes do not apply to us. Philippians 2:4-9 tells us:

'Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name'

If we are to give like God, then we should give everything we are and have to him. This does not mean giving it all away – God has given us good things for our enjoyment, so it is right to enjoy a glass of wine, a trip to the cinema, a new CD. However, we ought to think of the bigger picture – our enjoyment should include and focus on Jesus and his work of saving people. Use 100% of your money to God's glory. How much should you give away? Generously and willingly!

What if I'm in debt?

If you are in debt, or living on students loans, then do remember that the money you give away is not yours but someone else's. This is not to say it is wrong to give, but you should do so responsibly. Paying back a debt is honest and honouring to God. In this situation, perhaps you should give particularly explicitly out of your sacrifices – for example, don't go out one night a week when you would have and give the money away. It may be right for you not to give any money away, but to use it to glorify God by repaying your debt quickly. There are no rules on this, we have a God of grace.

Who should I give it to?

There are many well-deserving and good Christian organisations which need support. However Galatians 6:6 says: 'One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches'. In our situation this is our church, which pays for those who teach us to be able to do this work. The first place Christians should give to is their church.

Does The Plant need my money?

The Plant is a fairly cost-effective church and we don't have to worry about lots of the things that bog other churches down (e.g. repairing listed buildings or keeping the graveyard looking nice!). However, it still costs about £7,000 a month to keep The Plant going. This is a combination of salaries, apprentice costs, venue hire, food, van hire and administration costs. Our current regular monthly income from Plant Members is a long way short of this figure. To date, we have been able to bridge the gap thanks to grants we have received from trust funds and the generosity of our Plant Supporters group. However, we cannot assume that this external income will continue (nor is it the Biblical model for a church's finances in the medium to long term) – and so The Plant does really need your money.

Practically – how can I give to The Plant?

There are a number of different ways in which you can make your donation(s).

Tax Payers

If you are a tax payer, our strong preference would be for you to support us through a **Stewardship¹ Sovereign Account**.

If you give through **Stewardship**, we can receive an extra 28%² from the re-claimed tax on your gift, at no extra cost to you.

If you already have an account with **Stewardship**, you can instruct them to begin giving to The Plant from your account right away.

If you need to set up an account, take a Stewardship form from the leaflet rack at one of our Plant meetings. This will tell you what to do. If you have any questions, or can't find the form, then do ask Flick or email flick@theplant.net

Non Tax Payers (and those not wishing to set up a Stewardship account)

If you are not a tax payer, or do not wish to give to us via a Stewardship account as described above, you can make donations to The Plant directly as follows:

1. By Cheque

Please make cheques payable to 'The Plant' and send to: The Plant, PO Box 117, Manchester, M19 2YZ.

2. By Bank Transfer

You can make your donation by bank transfer³, either on or a one-off or ongoing basis. Our account details are as follows:

Payee: The Plant **Sort Code:** 08-92-99 **Account Number:** 65130180

As a **Payment Description** or **Payment Reference**, please use your surname. This can sometimes be done by choosing 'pay bills' rather than transferring money.

Notifying Us Of Your Donation

If you decide to give to The Plant we would be grateful if you would also e-mail the details (your name, the amount donated and the method used) to gifts@theplant.net so that we can ensure that we receive your donation and update our records accordingly. We will of course keep this information confidential.

However, we also understand that some people may wish to give anonymously.

Further Information

If you need any further information or have any questions about giving to The Plant, please contact Flick Hindley, The Plant's Treasurer, at flick@theplant.net or on 0161 226 6860.

¹ **Stewardship** is the Christian financial support charity formed by the merger of **Stewardship Services** and **Sovereign Giving**. See www.stewardship.org.uk for more information.

² Please note that The Plant will automatically receive the extra 28% if you only use your Stewardship account to give to The Plant. However, if you support multiple churches / charities, the re-claimed tax is credited to your Sovereign Account and you will need to allocate the extra funds to the chosen beneficiaries yourself.

³ A Bank Transfer is very much like a Direct Debit. The only difference is that you tell your bank to give the money rather than the person/organisation who is going to receive the money telling them. You can usually arrange a Bank Transfer by visiting your bank in person, via telephone banking or online banking. All you will need is The Plant's bank details, as shown above.