

Biblical Principle of Giving

Dear BPCWAians, Last week we looked at the reasons for church extension, the approach we took, the potential designs, and the building fund required. So, the need for the work and what we need to do is clear. Now, we need to do our part as worshippers to give to the Lord's work in BPCWA. This week we shall consider "Why should I give?"

Why should I give? Some are willing to give readily, while some will give grudgingly, and there may be some who do not intend to give. In all cases, everyone needs to first understand the Biblical principle of giving so that we give with the right understanding and also become willing to give.

1. Because I am returning. God says, "Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine" (Job 41:11). No one can say "I gave God first (which is what "prevented me" me implies) and now He owes me". Paul reiterated this principle, "Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" (Rom 11:35). We are just returning to God what He gave us in the first place. The children of Israel understood this principle, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." (1Ch 29:14). God reiterates this in the New Testament, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor 4:7). There is nothing to be proud of when we give because we are just returning.

2. Because I am just a steward. In the Gospels, Christ taught about stewardship of slaves who are given money to handle. God is our Master and all that we have come from Him. It is God who provided and prospered you, "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deu 8:18). I am to handle the money for His use, not to use it for my own selfish pleasures. But if we fail to realise this principle, we will keep asking, "Why should I give?". We should not steal from God what He meant for His own use. We often pray, "We give Thee but Thine own". Now is the time to prove that we mean what we pray – to return and not withhold for ourselves when God calls for it.

3. Because stewardship means returning it when the time comes. God moved the Egyptians to give much to the children of Israel (Ex 12:34-36). He did so with the Tabernacle building in mind. When the time came to build it, the children willingly brought out what they received so that it could be used for the building of the Tabernacle (Ex 35-36). Imagine a servant, who was given some money with the purpose of purchasing something, telling his master "this is my money, why should I use it to buy things for you?".

We give thee but thine own,
Whate'er the gift may be,
For all we have is thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from thee.

May we thy bounties thus
As stewards true receive,
And gladly, as thou blessest us,
To thee our firstfruits give.

4. Because it is a privilege to be part of God's work. God gives us so that we are able to participate in His work. He puts things into our hands to give, so that we can experience the joy of being able to be part of His kingdom's work. Some 30 years ago, some people willingly returned to God what God gave them when the time came to purchase our current BPCWA building. As a result, we are blessed with and can enjoy the facilities we have today. In this building we can worship God, study His Word, serve Him, have fellowship with each other, and your children can have Sunday School and be taught. We have been blessed by what we received. But God reminds us it is more blessed to give! As the

hymnwriter rightly points out “Give as 'twas given to you in your need, Love as the Master loved you”. You will not know the joy of being part of God’s planned work if you do not give. Remember, those who hesitated missed the opportunity when the time passed (Ex 36:6-7). We must realise that we are privileged to be born and worshipping in BPCWA at this particular time. Or do you see it as, “Oh how unfortunate, why must I be here now? Why not another generation give instead of me?” God has put in my hands so that now I have the privilege of returning it to Him for His work. God willing, we shall look more at this subject when we discuss “How should I give?” next week.

Yours in our Lord’s service
Pastor

奉献的圣经原则

西澳笃信圣经长老会亲爱的会众们，上周我们探讨了教会扩建的原因、我们所采取的处理方式、潜在的设计及所需的建堂基金。因此，我们都清楚这项工程的需要及我们该做些什么。现在，我们必须尽我们身为敬拜者的本分，奉献资助神在西澳笃信圣经长老会的工作。这周我们将会探讨“我为何应当奉献？”

我为何应当奉献？ 有些人预备好甘心乐意地奉献，而有些人却极不情愿地奉献，也有些人打算不奉献。在这一切情况下，每一个人首先都需要明白奉献的圣经原则，以便我们能以正确的理解来奉献，并且也使我们甘心乐意地奉献。

1. 因为我是在归还。 神说，“谁先给我甚麽，使我偿还呢？天下万物都是我的。”（伯 41:11）没有人可以说“我先给神，现在是祂欠我”。保罗重述了这个原则，“谁是先给了他，使他后来偿还呢？”（罗 11:35）。我们只不过是在将神首先赐给我们的归还给祂。以色列百姓明白这个原则，“我算甚麽，我的民算甚麽，竟能如此乐意奉献？因为万物都从你而来，我们把从你而得的献给你。”（历上 29:14）神在新约圣经中又重述了这一点，“使你与人不同的是谁呢？你有甚麽不是领受的呢；若是领受的，为何自夸，仿佛不是领受的呢？”（林前 4:7）当我们奉献时，我们是没有什么可夸的，因为我们只不过是在归还。

2. 因为我只不过是个管家。 在福音书中，基督教导有关仆人作为管家而处理所委托的财物之职分。神是我们的主人，我们所拥有的一切都是从祂而来的。供应及使你亨通的那一位是神，“你要记念耶和華—你的神，因为得货财的力量是他给你的，为要坚定他向你列祖起誓所立的约，像今日一样。”（申 8:18）我必须为了神的用途来处理财物，而不是用在自己自私的娱乐上。倘若我们没有意识到这个原则，我们就会不停地问道，“我为何应当奉献？”。我们不该偷窃神本要作为己用的财物。我们常常祷告，“我们所献上的本是你的”。现在是时候来证明我们所祷告的是真心的—当神要求时，我们便会归还，而不为自己而保留。

3. 因为管家的职分意味着时候到了就该归还。 神感动埃及人给了以色列百姓许多财物（出 12:34-36）。祂这么做是考虑到帐幕的制造。当制造帐幕的时候到了，百姓们都乐意拿出他们所领受的，以便这些财物能用于制造帐幕（出 35-36）。想象一个仆人，领了一些钱来购买一些东西，却告诉他的主人说，“这是我的钱，我为什么应当用来为你买东西？”。

凡我向主所呈，
都是主赐的恩，
凡我所有，都属于主，
是主托付仆人。

凡我财帛金银，
都是主赐的恩，
因此任何初生嘉果，
我当向主献呈。

4. 因为有份参与神的工作是个特权。神赐给我们，好让我们能够参与祂的工作。祂将事物交在我们手中来奉献，以便我们能经历参与祂国度事工的喜乐。大约 30 年前，一些人在购买我们目前的西澳笃信圣经长老会之建筑物时，他们甘心乐意地将神赐给他们的财物归还给神。因此，我们今天能蒙福及享用这些设备。在这栋建筑物中，我们能敬拜神、学习祂的话语、服事祂、彼此团契交通，并且你的而儿女也能上主日学及受教导。我们因着所领受的而蒙福。然而，神提醒我们施舍更为有福！就如诗歌的作者正确指出，“白白得来，故要白白施予；爱人要想主爱你”。如果你不奉献，你就不能理解参与神计划中的工作之喜乐。你当记得，那些犹豫不决的人，时候过了就失去了机会（出 36:6-7）。我们必须意识到，我们出身于这特别的时代，亦是在这个时代于西澳笃信圣经长老会敬拜，这是我们所蒙的福分。或者，你是否认为“这是何等的幸啊，为什么我现在必须在这时代？为什么要我奉献，而不是另一代的人？”神将财物交在我们的手中，好让我们现在有福分为着神的工作而归还给祂。若神许可，我们在下周探讨“我该如何奉献？”时，将会更详细地探讨这个课题。

为主服事，

牧师