

Our Calling to Give as We are Blessed

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It seems that my article on “Our Calling to Give as We are Blessed” has generated some negative reactions. In the hopes that we can arrive at a better understanding of this important matter, I will do my best to clarify my position and answer the objections raised.

The first item that is of concern deals with my statements regarding the practice of writing checks for the church budget. Let me quote from the brother’s letter:

“First of all, Mr. Kalsbeek stated his disapproval of the practice of writing checks for the church budget. However, if we condemn this practice, we should also object to the use of numbered budget envelopes by some of our churches and schools. Since the organization involved obviously has a record of the numbers and the people to which they are assigned and also keeps a yearly total of the amounts given by each, this is just as questionable as writing a check every week.”

It’s true that I have serious reservations about the whole matter of the envelope system as it is presently used in some of our churches and schools. I think it can be coercive and that it does not develop a Godly attitude toward giving.

As far as the matter of writing checks for the church budget is concerned, I personally have changed my own giving habits as a result of my thoughts as expressed in this article. I used to write checks each month for the budget and often also for some of the special collections. I do not do that anymore. I think the change has been a good one for me, but especially for my children. My children now are given an opportunity to give each week and not just once a month. Furthermore, they are putting money in the collection plate and not a piece of paper called a check which is certainly meaningless to younger children.

If any of you who read this article is comfortable with writing checks and using the envelope system, I certainly respect your right to your opinion. I, however, upon thoughtful consideration, have had to change my method of giving.

In the second place, the brother objected to the last three paragraphs of my article. Again let me quote this section of his letter.

“We have the greatest objection, however, to the final 3 paragraphs of the article. One of the points made by Mr. Kalsbeek is that our giving must be done in secret, that we must not even let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. Even though this is a very good point, he completely contradicts himself by revealing the amount given to our schools by 2 families while he was on a drive. He mentions no names, but gives graphic descriptions of each, which could give many people a pretty good idea whom he is writing about. He then calls upon us to judge which family was blessed in its giving. It is not the business of Mr. Kalsbeek nor anyone else how much these people could or did give. Neither is it our place to judge on the matter. God alone can do that and those who do not give as they should will answer to Him.

“Doesn’t this raise serious doubts in your mind about the use of drives in our churches? Can we honestly say we are following the command of God to give in secret when we conduct a drive? Will each man who collected for a drive this year print in future issues of the Beacon Lights how

much money a particular family gives? Each one of us must consider our own motives, not those of others and with true love give as we are blessed.”

I really believe in this regard that the brother has entirely missed the point that I was trying to make in this illustration.

It was not my intent to stir up endless speculation as to who each of these families were. That would certainly be uncalled for and unprofitable to say the least. Besides, the exact size of the families and the exact amounts given, I have long forgotten. The point that did stick with me was the large contrast concerning giving as the families were blessed. I took the liberty to use this illustration because I'm sure no one would know who was whom.

The whole purpose of the illustration was obviously designed to reinforce the point I was trying to make: that we should give as we are blessed. The one was blessed with much materially and gave little. The other, though struggling at a subsistence level just trying to supply the needs of his family, the blessed heritage of the Lord, gave with a liberal hand. The one obviously gave grudgingly, while the other gave gladly.

I would like to know how it is possible not to judge? I certainly believe we have to judge. Jesus, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, asks at the conclusion, “Which now of these, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among thieves?” Luke 10:36. Just as the lawyer was asked to judge in this matter and also judged correctly when he answered, “He that sheweth mercy,” so also we can and must judge in this case. The judgment is not as to the eternal destiny of each, but rather as to which was blessed in his giving and which was not blessed in his giving. It certainly was not my intention to judge the one to eternal bliss in heaven and the other to everlasting torment in hell. God alone can and does judge in that way.

I, for one, would hesitate to say that financial drives are wrong. I do question, however, the way in which drives are conducted. If we weren't so concerned with keeping a record of our giving for internal revenue purposes, and instead each put in a sealed envelope the amount of money that we felt we could contribute, we would be giving in secret and no one but God would know what we gave.

Certainly we must consider our own motives when we give. But then let us also consider giving as we are blessed.

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