

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A MAJOR GIFT

*Extending Yourself to
Extend Christ's kingdom*

You make a living by what you get,
but you make a life by what you give.

Winston Churchill

Make as much money as you can,
save as much as you can,
and give as much as you can.

John Wesley

“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.”

2 Corinthians 8:9

Guiding Biblical Principles

JESUS IS PASSIONATE ABOUT EXTENDING HIS KINGDOM.

- Jesus spoke more frequently about the Kingdom than any other subject. Significantly, he said that his purpose was to “preach the good news of the kingdom of God” (Luke 4:43). He launched his public ministry by announcing the arrival of his kingdom and calling people to him who would in turn serve as his kingdom extending agents (Matthew 4:17-19). He urged them to pray that the kingdom might come on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). The New Testament and the history of Christianity ever since is full of examples of lives transformed by the power of Jesus.
- Christ the King’s purpose is to honor the King by powerfully extending his reign in Houston and throughout the world. The EXTEND campaign is about leveraging the magnificent opportunity we have before us to do this.

Apply: By participating in a significant way in this stewardship campaign you are affirming that you too are passionate about extending Christ’s kingdom.

GOD EXPECTS EACH OF US TO GROW SPIRITUALLY IN THE AREA OF FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP.

- While Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God more frequently than any other subject, do you know what was second on his list? Money. The Bible as a whole offers roughly 500 verses on prayer and faith, but more than 2000 verses on money and possessions. How a person handles their financial resources is a significant indicator of their spiritual health. It is a subject absolutely central to our discipleship as followers of Christ.
- The Apostle Paul praised the Corinthian Christians for their maturity in many areas but advised that they must also “grow in the grace of giving.” 2 Cor. 8:8

Apply: Financial stewardship is an area in which every Christian must continue to grow. How encouraging it is to remember that this growth is nurtured in the grace of God. Are you growing in the grace of giving? Are you allowing God’s truth to push you in this vital area of your discipleship?

GOD OWNS IT ALL

- “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and those who dwell therein.” Psalm 24:1
- “Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers.” Deuteronomy 8:17-18
- “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and the earth is yours; Yours is the kingdom, . . . Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all.” 1 Chronicles 29:11-12

Apply: Take time prayerfully to grapple with the implications of this revolutionary concept: all our financial resources are not really ours at all—they are God’s.

- Therefore, we are not owners but stewards—managers of God’s money!

- Are you operating as though God owns everything you have? Or do you operate as if you own it but will share some of it with him for his purposes?
- Do you view assets as permanently yours and only consider current year cash flow as available for God's calling?
- Praise the Lord daily for His provision in your life.

GOD IS MOST CONCERNED ABOUT OUR HEARTS

At this point, you may find yourself a bit uncomfortable. How crucial it is to remember that God is not after our bank account, but our hearts. He created us to love him and glorify him.

- "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21
- "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Matthew 6:24
- Zaccheus' releasing funds reflected a change in his heart (Luke 19:8-9)
- The early church's releasing of funds was a reflection of their hearts (Acts 2:45, 2 Corinthians 8:3-4)
- The rich young ruler's unwillingness to depart with his possessions reflected his heart (Matthew 19:20-22).
- "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." I Timothy 6:10
 - Notice that this verse does not say that money is a root of all kinds of evil. Money is not evil. There's nothing wrong with being wealthy—God has given us all that we have!
 - We were made to worship God. Our hearts wander and gravitate toward other things like money, one of the most seductive substitute gods or idols.
- "It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace" (Heb. 13:9)

Apply: Giving is really about worship. In the great worship scene in heaven, the angels sing: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Revelation 5:12). How liberating it is when our hearts, strengthened by God's grace, love and worship him instead of settling for the love of money.

A MAJOR GIFT IS A SACRIFICIAL GIFT

THE MAJOR GIFT WAS GIVEN AT EXTRAORDINARY COST.

- "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." 2 Corinthians 8:9
- The greatest gift came at extraordinary cost—God gave his son's life that we might be redeemed (purchased out of slavery to sin). "In him we have redemption through his blood, according to the *riches* of his grace which he lavished upon us" Ephesians 1:7-8.
- Remarkably, God did not stop with this extravagant gift. Instead his gift to us became an indicator of his willingness to continue to give to us: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" Romans 8:32.
- As you consider a major gift, allow the beauty of the gospel to speak to your heart regarding the magnificent gift he has lavished upon us at extraordinary cost.

SACRIFICIAL GIVING MEANS OUR GIVING COMES AT A SIGNIFICANT COST

- One of the more surprising passages in the Bible regarding money is the well-known episode of the widow who placed two small copper coins into the offering. It is surprising because Jesus actually sat and watched what various people gave. Then he used it as a teaching point for his disciples. He contrasted the widow with “many rich people” who “put in large sums.” Jesus commended the widow instead of the wealthy people, not because of the amount she gave but because of the costly nature of her gift: “They all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.” Mark 12:44
- Similarly, Paul spoke forcefully to the Corinthian church about financial stewardship by commending the Macedonians who “gave beyond their means.” 2 Corinthians 8:3
- King David believed that it was only fitting that his offering to the Lord must be costly. “I will not offer as a sacrifice to the Lord my God that which costs me nothing.” 2 Samuel 24:24
- Sacrificial giving is a gift that is motivated by God’s grace and results in a significant cost to you.
- It is therefore not simply giving out of our surpluses, but rather giving to the point that we have to sacrifice something.
- Sacrificial giving is giving beyond one’s ability. It is giving when the numbers don’t necessarily make sense, when the world around you would say you should not give that much, when you give what you don’t want to part with.

A MAJOR GIFT IS A WISE INVESTMENT**GOD IS NOT OPPOSED TO INVESTMENTS. HE’S OPPOSED TO BAD ONES.**

- “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” Matthew 6:19-20.
- Generous, sacrificial, costly giving is the remedy for poor financial planning and covetousness. It forces us to become wise stewards. It pulls our affections away from things we want but cannot have. It builds discipline and responsibility. More than this, it is a declaration of war on the sins of greed, selfishness, and discontentedness.
- “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, *thus storing up for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*”
I Timothy 6:17-19

CONSIDER WHAT A GREAT INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY YOU HAVE.

- A great investment is one that yields an extraordinary return.
- “whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” 2 Corinthians 9:6

- The book of Proverbs is a virtual handbook on the good things that will happen when we share our money generously and wisely.
- In the book of Malachi, God says, "Try me now in this" and then promises that if His people give, He will "pour out for you such blessing that there will not be enough room to receive it" (3:10). God promises to open the windows of heaven and flood us with blessing.
- Church history is filled with the testimonies of happy givers who have found God's Word to be true. God asks us to put Him to the test, to try Him in this matter. He guarantees blessing to givers. It's the best investment we can make. However, God promises nothing but wallets with holes for those who want their religion cheap (Haggai 1:3-6).
- Imagine the impact this campaign will have for generations to come. By extending yourself significantly, you will participate spiritually in a return far greater than any earthly investment might yield with the same resources.

YOUR GIFT MAY BE MADE OVER THREE YEARS

You may EXTEND your gifts over a three-year period, which means you can make a pledge today and fulfill it by the end of 2010. If you would like to begin your contribution to the campaign in this calendar year, you will enjoy the benefit of four tax years.

EXTEND OVER AND ABOVE

Contributions to the EXTEND campaign should be over and above your regular tithe and offering to Christ the King.

What is the tithe? In the Old Testament believers were required to give a tenth of their income to the support of the ministry and the needs of the poor. While the New Testament does not give believers this requirement today, surely we who are blessed more are not encouraged to give less. Can we claim to give freely without covetousness, if we give less than OT people? Thus the tithe (10%) is a kind of minimum guideline for giving.

At Christ the King, we urge all members to tithe to support the operating budget of the church. Contributions to the EXTEND campaign, therefore, should not impact one's giving to the operating budget of the church.

NEXT STEPS TOWARD A RESPONSIBLE DECISION

ENGAGE IN THE SPIRITUAL PROCESS BEFORE US.

- Resist the temptation strictly to see this as a 'financial' decision or quickly to determine what you will do. This is a profoundly important spiritual process that demands serious spiritual attention.
- Genuinely commit to seeking the Lord in this matter over the next month.
- "Seek first his kingdom" (Matthew 6:33) as you discern how God is calling you to participate in the EXTEND campaign.

PRAYERFULLY REFLECT UPON IMPORTANT BIBLICAL TRUTHS:

Here's a sampling of passages you might use:

Deut 8:18

Prov 11: 24, 25, 28

Eccl 5;10-12

Matt 6:19-21

Luke 12:13-21

Acts 2: 42-47

Acts 4: 32-35

II Cor. 8: 1-9

II Cor. 9: 6-11

I Timothy 6: 6-10; 17-18

Rev. 3: 17-18

Especially consider this: God Owns Everything

- Prayerfully reflecting upon all your assets (you may choose to do this with your financial statement in front of you), offer thanks to the Lord for entrusting these resources to your care.
- Remembering that you are a steward or manager of all that you have, contemplate in prayer what it would mean for you, "to whom much has been given" (Luke 12:48), to be a faithful and wise manager of all that has been entrusted to you.

ASK THE LORD TO REVEAL YOUR HEART'S STRUGGLES TO YOU IN THIS AREA, GRANT YOU THE GRACE TO REPENT WHERE NECESSARY, AND MOVE FORWARD BOLDLY IN JOYFUL FAITH.

- To challenge the Corinthians, Paul held up the Macedonians, who though extremely poor and undergoing severe trials, nevertheless gave sacrificially ("beyond their means, of their own free will", 2 Cor. 8:3). It is instructive and encouraging how Paul launched into this subject: He said, "we want you to know, brothers, about the *grace* of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia" (2 Cor. 8:1).
- As with the Macedonians, it will be grace at work in our hearts that will enable us to do what is against nature. This is true in any area of life, but especially so given the potential of money to delude us (1 Timothy 6:9-10).
- When grace has melted our hearts, we find giving major gifts actually to be a remarkably joyful experience.
 - Consider Zacchaeus' experience (Luke 19:1-10) who, without being asked to do so, freely gave half of his financial net worth and pledged to pay back fourfold anyone he defrauded. This he did "joyfully" as he was received by Jesus, who poured out his grace upon him declaring, "today salvation has come to this house... For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost."

RESPOND WORSHIPFULLY.

- Worshipful givers willingly and joyfully give because they recognize that God is worthy of such a gift.
- When King David gave a major gift to launch the building project for the Lord's temple, he worshipped:
 - "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all... but who am I and who 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.”

1 Chronicles 29:10-14

- The EXTEND campaign is ultimately about this: what does it mean for us most responsibly to fulfill the privilege we have before us. God has made us his instruments through which his Kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven. And as the angels in heaven worship, so may our worship on earth, at Christ the King, likewise be:
 - “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

Revelation 5:12

