



CONSERVATIVE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE



POSITION PAPER ON BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP

The Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC) is devoted to the Lordship of Christ over the local church and to the development of discipleship among our members. The purpose of this paper is to teach how stewardship flows from discipleship and to provide Scriptural teaching on giving and the support of Christian ministry.

The Tithe in the Old Testament

The Scriptures repeatedly emphasize the sacrificial giving of one's income to those in need. This generosity involves not only giving to the Lord's work in the faith community, but also to those outside the church for the purpose of missions. The Old Testament teaches that God's people should "tithe" (ten percent). In fact, the practice of tithing predates the revelation of Moses' Law. The earliest reference to tithing in the Bible shows that Abram gave "a tenth of everything" to Melchizedek, a priest of God Most High, as a thank offering for his protection in battle (Genesis 14:17-20). Jacob also pledged a tithe to God in response to the Lord's covenant promises (Genesis 28:20-22). In the Book of Leviticus, God required his people to give a "tithe" of their grain and of their "herd and flock, every tenth...to the Lord." (Leviticus 27:30, 32). Under the Mosaic Law, proceeds from their tithes were directed primarily to support the Levites and the priests who provided religious leadership (Numbers 18:21-29) and for the relief of the poor (Deuteronomy 14:22-29). The well-known verse from Malachi (3:10) called for God's people to "bring the full tithe into the storehouse;" an act of faith that would cause great favor to fall upon Israel and lead all nations to call God's people "blessed" and would transform Judah into "a land of delight" (Malachi 3:12).

The Old Testament also speaks often about various kinds of offerings – sin offering, guilt offering, and general benevolences to those in need of assistance, even strangers and travelers. (Leviticus 6-8, Deuteronomy 15:1-21; 16:10, Psalm 41:1) These were understood to be from the heart and in addition to the tithe. This is specifically addressed when Malachi speaks of "tithes and offerings" (Malachi 3:8), suggesting a distinction between what was expectedly due God and what was offered out of generosity. Thus giving was seen as a response to God, a part of one's partnership within the community of faith, and a means of compassionately responding to those in need.

Christian Stewardship in the New Testament

In Matthew 23:23, Jesus makes reference to the "tithe," noting that it has been distorted by the scribes and Pharisees into a legalistic practice: "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law; justice, mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others." In this verse, Jesus pointed out that though they were scrupulous in tithing everything, they should not have neglected the heart of the law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness. It is important to note, however, that during Christ's earthly ministry and after his Resurrection and Ascension and the subsequent establishment of the New Testament church at Pentecost (Acts 2), the requirement to "tithe one tenth of one's income" is never explicitly imposed on Christians. Rather than stipulating a fixed amount, the New Testament emphasizes generous, sacrificial, and cheerful giving for "God loves a cheerful giver" who "sows bountifully." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). The New Testament further promises that those who do this "will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way" (2 Corinthians 9:11). That means that God will bless us so that we can a blessing to others.

Thus, while Christians are not obligated to give a fixed amount, it is hard to imagine that God would expect the people of the New Covenant to give less than to tithe ten percent of their income like the people of the Old Covenant. In fact, the model of New Testament giving is the widow who gave her two mites (Mark 12:41-44). Jesus applauded her because she gave everything she had. She understood that God is the owner and we are the managers of his resources. He owns it all for “the earth is the LORD’s and everything in it, the world and all who live in it” (Psalms 24:1). The New Testament specifically encourages that we are to assist those in need: “If anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brothers in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17). The Apostle Paul devoted a significant portion of his third missionary journey to collecting funds for the needs of poor Christians in Jerusalem (see Acts 21:17; 24:17; Romans 15:25-28,31; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4, 9:12-15). Though it is right to give to the material needs of both believers and unbelievers (cf. Luke 6:32-36), the New Testament prioritizes giving to the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

The New Testament also places a significant emphasis on Christians financially supporting the needs of the local church and of those who do the work of ministry in the wider Church Universal through the proclamation of the Gospel (Galatians 6:6). The Apostle Paul received financial support from the Church in Philippi (cf. Philippians 4:15-19), and he commanded the New Testament churches to systematically support the ordained elders of their particular congregations: “especially those who labor in preaching and teaching, for the laborer deserves his wages.” (1 Timothy 5:17-18; cf. 1 Corinthians 9:6-14).

The CCCC Position

Stewardship in the CCCC is based on three guiding principles that we believe are foundational to Christian discipleship and our covenant community of faith. First, God is the owner of all things, the Provider of all we have, and thus to be consulted in all things. Every decision is a stewardship decision, to be based on God’s priorities. “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” (Psalm 24:1) The Holy Scriptures clearly teach that God owns everyone and everything.

Second, we believers are stewards of our lives and our possessions, not owners. God entrusts us with the decision of how God’s wealth will be used according to our understanding of His purpose and guidance through Scripture and prayer.

Third, we are blessed so that we can bless others. From those who have much, more will be expected. As stewards of His wealth we are to use the Lord’s resources to bless those both within and without the community of faith as a means of proclaiming God’s glory, giving evidence to His compassion and grace, and witnessing to His presence.

Therefore, the CCCC affirms that proportionate and regular giving of our time, talent, and treasure is an act of devotion for both believers and congregations. God has called us to give to our local church and to the wider Church in order to spread the gospel and minister to the poor. Affirming the New Testament’s teaching regarding Christian stewardship, the CCCC believes that, as true stewards of God’s grace, we Christians (and the Congregations to which we belong), must recognize that our lives in Jesus are not independent from other saints, but we also have a responsibility to support the whole Body of Christ and the world (see Romans 12:4-5, 2 Corinthians 8:13-14).

The members of a local congregation should regularly support the ministry of their church and the local church should regularly support the ministry of the gospel through the wider church. This understanding finds expression in the CCCC’s Code of Ethics for Churches that states, “Believing that our membership in the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference is not a privilege but involves responsibility... We will fulfill our fellowship, ministry and financial obligations to the Conference to the best of our ability.”

Giving is both the privilege and the duty of every believer. Planned sacrificial giving recognizes that everything we have comes from the Lord. It checks our greed, promotes personal discipline and thrift, testifies to our faith in Christ, promotes God's work in the world, and helps to eliminate human need.

Tithing is clearly not a requirement for New Testament believers and is certainly not a condition for salvation. While some can become legalistic about tithing and neglect to encourage cheerful giving, we do affirm that tithing is a wonderful spiritual discipline practiced as an expression of discipleship. The CCCC recognizes the personal and sensitive nature of every Christian's stewardship responsibility, and yet desires to emphasize that all believers are members of the wider Body of Christ and therefore, we must work together with all our fellow believers.

These principles will do much to build congregations of grace, thanksgiving, and joy as evidenced in 2 Corinthians 8-9. The CCCC believes that the joy of our salvation should motivate Christian giving (2 Corinthians 8:2). When Christians view their giving in light of Christ's self-giving, their attitude can only be transformed. Our ultimate purpose is to glorify God! "Yours, O God, 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. For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you" (1 Chronicles 29:11, 14).