



**MARKS**

**O F A D I S C I P L E**

# **7 MARKS OF A DISCIPLE**

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV).

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# MARK # 6

## A DISCIPLE...GIVES SACRIFICIALLY AND GENEROUSLY

*Optional Resource:*

*"How to Become a Generous Person"*

*Available online at [bellshoals.com/7marks](http://bellshoals.com/7marks)*

*or on the **Stephen Rummage app** on your mobile device.*

### INTRODUCTION

Someone has said that we are most like God when we give. Giving is a natural overflow of God's love for us and is seen in all three Persons of the Trinity. "For God so loved the world that He gave..." This most well-known verse, John 3:16, highlights the giving nature of our heavenly Father. Paul observes that the Son gave up the riches of heaven and accepted the life of a pauper so that each of us could be enriched (2 Corinthians 8:9). Finally, the Spirit dwells within believers and endows us with spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit. Since it is God's nature to give, disciples of Jesus Christ will want to grow in the grace of giving, also.

## WHY GIVE

The Word of God gives us four clear reasons for giving.

### 1. To Honor God

Proverbs 3:9 says "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce." Wealth is a general term, but the term "firstfruits" is very specific. If you were to give a friend a basket of peaches, he likely wouldn't care if they came from the first crop or the last crop of the season. But when we give to God, He asks that we give from the first of what we have. Why do you think God wants us to give from our "firstfruits," as opposed to giving from what is left over at the end of the month?

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Read Revelation 4:11.

God is worthy to receive honor because He has created all things. If you are a believer then you have been bought with the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ and are, therefore, doubly owned (1 Corinthians 6:20). However, God also loves us deeply and promises to care for us as His children. When we give from our firstfruits we acknowledge His love for us and demonstrate faith in Him to meet our needs. God is honored and pleased when we give in faith (Hebrews 11:6).

### 2. To Guard Our Hearts

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." Evil words and actions come from the heart (Matthew 12:33-34). So,

right living is more about controlling your heart than it is about controlling your actions. Giving to God's kingdom helps you focus your heart on eternal matters, and provides both an offensive and defensive strategy to guard your heart.

Matthew 6:21 states, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." As an offensive strategy, how can investing your money in God's work keep your heart more in tune with His?

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As a defensive strategy, what sin are we instructed to guard against in Luke 12:15?

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Why?

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Giving breaks the back of greed and covetousness. As you invest your resources in God's kingdom, you experience the joy of giving to impact eternity, and you become more aware of the emptiness of earthly possessions.

### **3. To Proclaim the Gospel and Do Good**

God instituted the tithe (10% of income) in the Old Testament to meet the needs of the Levites as they ministered fulltime to the Lord in the tabernacle, and later in the temple (Numbers 18:21). Paul was referring to this arrangement when he said, "In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the

the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14). Believers have an obligation to financially support the local church, as well as other individuals and organizations proclaiming the gospel, as the Lord leads.

Read Ephesians 4:28.

How does the command in this verse relate to the truth found in 2 Corinthians 5:17?

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God wants us to be generous toward meeting the needs of others, just like Jesus did when He was on earth. However, remember that the greatest gift you can share with someone is the good news of forgiveness through Jesus, which meets their greatest need.

#### **4. To Invest with Eternal Perspective.**

Read Matthew 6:19-20.

Life is filled with choices, and the world’s advice about making those choices. The ever-present reality of the advertising industry is testimony to this fact. Do these words from Jesus contain a command or advice from Jesus? Why?

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How does Jesus contrast your financial options (investing in the temporal or eternal) regarding:

a. The permanence of your investment?

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b. The security of your investment?

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## HOW TO GIVE

The Bible prescribes the way in which we give our tithes and offerings.

### 1. **Generously**

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

The church in Corinth had promised to contribute financially to the needs of the church in Jerusalem. Paul urged them to give a generous gift by reminding them that Christians receive in proportion to their generosity.

With this spiritual principle in mind, each Corinthian believer was encouraged to decide what to give. How were they to give? (circle one)

- a. fearfully
- b. out of obligation
- c. reluctantly
- d. joyfully

According to verse 8, what can we expect from God as we give to His kingdom joyfully?

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### 2. **Sacrificially**

Read 2 Samuel 24:21-25.

What conviction about giving to God did David state in verse 24?

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Let's say a child gives a parent a birthday gift. The gift would probably mean more to the parent if the parent knew the child earned the money for the gift, as opposed to the other parent giving the money to the child to buy the gift. How might this situation relate to our giving to God?

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Read Mark 12:41-44.

Jesus observed how the multitude was giving, not just what they were giving. From Jesus' perspective, the widow gave more than all the rich men because her level of sacrifice was greater than all the others combined. The attitude of the heart means more to God in giving than the amount in the hand.

### **3. Secretly**

Read Matthew 6:1-5, 16.

In this section of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, what are the three acts of righteousness Jesus mentions in verses 2, 5, and 16?

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Most people would readily agree that praying and fasting should be considered acts of righteousness. Why is giving also an act of righteousness?

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Is Jesus' caution in verse 1 more about an action or an attitude?

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Why?

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Read Acts 5:1-5.

How does this story relate to what Jesus taught in Matthew 6?

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Read Acts 4:36-37.

How is this story about Barnabas similar to the story about Ananias?

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How is it different?

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“For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7b). God spoke these words to His prophet Samuel when Samuel assumed that Jesse’s tall, handsome son Eliab was God’s next choice for King of Israel. Instead, God had chosen Jesse’s youngest son, David. Men are easily impressed by outward appearances. We each have a sinful tendency to want to impress others so they will think highly of us. When our motives for our actions, including giving, are to impress others, God is not impressed. Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, were obviously trying to impress the

apostles with the amount of their gift. That was sin. Barnabas was not seeking the applause of others when he gave his gift openly. Giving secretly is the best way to keep pride in check.

## **APPLICATION**

Based on what you have learned about giving to God in this lesson, are there any changes you need to make? Pray about your answer to each of these questions:

What should I give?

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When should I give?

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Where should I give?

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How should I give?

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Why should I give?

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### **SUGGESTED MEMORY VERSE:**

*"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."*

2 Corinthians 9:6