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The New Testament Teaches Planned Giving

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I PURPOSE

To return \$ _____ on the first day of every week.

Name _____

Address _____



“It is not what the Bible teaches that divides the world into religious groups, it is what the Bible does not teach that divides the world.”

T. Eugene Milholland

The New Testament teaches planned giving

IN FACT, this is the only kind of giving the New Testament does teach! Everything we do for the Lord must be planned. It cannot be done in a haphazard fashion. Prayer, Bible study, worship, personal work must be planned if they are to be effective. The same is true concerning the giving of our money to support the church.

In 2 Corinthians 8:10-11 Paul said to the Corinthians concerning their giving: "And herein I give my judgment: for this is expedient for you, who were the first to make a beginning a year ago, not only to do, but also to will. But now complete the doing also; that as there was the readiness to will, so there may be the completion also out of your ability." Regarding this collection for the saints, the Corinthians had "made a beginning a year ago." They had promised a year ahead that they would give. *It is scriptural to promise what we will give for a YEAR ahead.* They had "a readiness to will" in this matter. They were ready and willing to promise what they would give to the Lord. Inasmuch as they had made this financial pledge, Paul urged them to fulfill it. "Now complete the doing also."

It is scriptural to purpose our giving a year ahead. It is also scriptural for elders, preach-

ers, and teachers to urge those who have purposed to fulfill (or pay) their purpose. Concerning this matter of planned giving, Paul further said, "Achaia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them" (2 Corinthians 9:2). Nothing encourages liberality in other Christians more than the example of those who have planned ahead what they will give.

Planning, however, is not enough. "I thought it necessary therefore to entreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your aforepromised bounty" (2 Corinthians 9:5). The Corinthians had promised "beforehand" what they would give. They had purposed a year ahead. Paul urged them to fulfill (pay) their pledge. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 he further taught them to give as they purposed in their hearts. Giving must be according to a purpose plan, or pledge. We must decide what we will give before we contribute on the first day of the week. With God's help, we must then faithfully carry out our purpose.

Some brethren object to the "purpose system" of giving. Yet it is one of the best (if not the best) methods of giving in practice in churches of Christ today. We don't mind signing our name to a note at the bank promising to pay the money when due. We don't object to signing papers obligating ourselves for a year ahead when we buy on the installment plan. We are not averse to "putting down" on paper how much we will give on a new church

building! Why should we then object to using the "purpose system" in our giving? Are we willing to use wise methods to advance our own interests and refuse to use them for the Lord's work? Are we ashamed for the elders to know how little we give?

An Example of Planned Giving

The Skillman Avenue Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas (where I serve as preacher) uses the "purpose system" of giving. Most of the members sign a purpose card indicating to the elders and deacons how much they plan to give each Sunday for the coming year. We set aside the first Sunday in December each year as "Purpose Sunday" at Skillman Avenue. At this service the purpose cards are passed out and all members are requested to sign and return them at that time. Before this, the new budget has been thoroughly explained to the congregation and sermons on giving have been preached. We have always had a large percentage of our budget purposed each year as a result of using this method. Our 1953 budget of \$2,500 per Sunday has been pledged to the extent of 91% plus, which is a good average. As a result of such planned giving, the congregation has increased its budget substantially each year and it now gives over *ten times what it gave ten years ago*. Many brethren say the purpose system has taught them really how to give. As a result of increased liberality, these members have taken a greater interest in the work of the congregation. *Planned giving is scriptural*. The purpose sys-

tem is reasonable and logical. It is wise. It increases the contributions tremendously. It stimulates the spirit of sacrifice and generosity among the members and, above all, it causes brethren to feel more keenly their financial responsibility to support the Lord's work on every first day of the week as they have been prospered.

If congregations wish to double, triple, or even quadruple their contributions, they would do well to educate their members to such a system of giving and inaugurate it without delay. Remember *that Christians will give more when they are taught more!* When they are asked to purpose they feel an individual responsibility for the financial program of the church. When a challenging budget is put before them, they are willing to support it. Let us encourage planned giving on the part of every Christian! It will pay both spiritually and financially!

By JOHN H. BANISTER, Dallas, Texas

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