

## Introduction:

Over the last few weeks Pastor Mark has surveyed both the Old and the New Testament in order to help us understand what the bible teaches about giving. This week we compare two opposite attitudes toward the subject. You can find Pastor Mark's sermon notes [here](#)<sup>1</sup> or listen to the sermon by clicking [here](#).<sup>2</sup>



**“God doesn’t want our time, talents, and/or treasures. God wants our heart.”**

## Scripture:

See [Acts 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 in your bible, or click here.](#)

## So What?

This week's passages compare two very different perspectives on giving and generosity. Acts 5:1-11 describes the self-centered attitude of Ananias and his wife Sapphira. We see a stark contrast to their example in 2 Cor. 8:1-5 where we read about the joyful, grace-driven giving of the Macedonians. Ananias and Sapphira did give money for the benefit of the saints who were in need, yet their motive was selfish. They wanted a good reputation for having given “everything” yet they secretly held back. In contrast to Ananias and Sapphira, the Macedonians were themselves afflicted by poverty, and yet when they heard that Paul was collecting for needy believers in Jerusalem the Macedonians sought Paul out, begging him to take their contribution, and they gave out of their poverty. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, Peter said that they had been influenced by Satan and had lied to God; this cost them their lives. The Macedonians were influenced by the grace of God, Paul says, and saw it as a favor to be able to give in God's name. “God doesn't want our time, talents, and/or treasures. God wants our hearts. When he has that, we willingly give him everything else. The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. *Let us excel in the grace of giving* (2 Corinthians 8:7)”<sup>3</sup>

## What Now?

1. Motivation is a major theme in the New Testament. Ananias and Sapphira sinned against the Lord because of their motivation. Their sin wasn't holding back some of the money from the sale of land, as Peter pointed out (See Acts 5:4). Their sin was that they sought the approval of men over the approval of God, and lied to obtain it. Compare this with Matthew 6:1-4. What is the major difference between giving that is accepted by God and giving that is rejected by God?
2. Read 2 Cor. 8:4-5 again. This time compare the text with Jesus' words in Matthew 6:1-8. Whatever we do (giving, prayer, worship, etc.) is distinguished by who it is we are seeking; it's our motivations that matter. Why do we do the things we do? Do we give in order to please men, or God? Do we want glory, or do we seek God's glory? The good news is this: even if we have been motivated by improper motivation in the past, God will forgive us if we confess this to him and repent from those motivations. He is able to take self-centered people and turn them into grace-driven, God-centered people. See 2 Cor. 8:1.
3. Seeing that God's grace is able to turn us from self-centeredness and transform us into being others-minded, how might our lives change if we were to earnestly seek for that kind of change? Challenge: Let us follow the Macedonians example. They “gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to [others].” (2 Cor. 8:5) Let us pray for the next seven days to be first of all God-focused. I believe if we do this then we will likewise be moved to give ourselves generously to others, because this is “the will of God.”

<sup>1</sup> <https://wheelsms.wordpress.com/2015/10/25/the-heart-of-generosity-2/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://firstcentralbaptist.com/sermons/generosity.html>

<sup>3</sup> This text has been adapted from Pastor's sermon notes.