

GIVING

A church passionate about knowing, applying and
proclaiming the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

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<http://cityonahill.com.au/assets/docs/GivingBooklet.pdf>

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH MY MONEY?

How would our culture answer this one? 'Indulge yourself', 'It's all about you!' the marketing of our age tells us. Our culture says that earning money to spend on ourselves is a marker of success: the more lavish the lifestyle, the bigger the toys, the more outfits and shoes on the rack, the more countries visited, the faster the car . . . the more happy we are? Sadly, the world has this one upside down!

As Christians, we need to recognise first and foremost that everything we have is given to us by God. 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,' shouts the Psalmist (Psalm 24:1) - or hear Paul's instruction to Timothy, 'everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving (*1 Timothy 4:4*).

Money is a great part of creation, which can do so much good if used faithfully. But of course, as we look around our culture and at our own heart, we know that the money rat-race can also be a trap and a burden, a slave-master who can take our allegiance away from the living God. Jesus was acutely aware of our temptation; he famously taught us, 'you cannot serve God and money' (*Luke 16:10*). So perhaps a helpful re-phrasing of the question is in order!

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH GOD'S MONEY ENTRUSTED TO ME?

Thankfully, the Bible gives us some clear priorities on this one. Our first priority is to provide for our family - and relatives, if needs be (e.g. *1 Timothy 5:8*). Second, we are to acknowledge that Gospel workers need our support. In the Bible we see a pattern laid down from the very beginning of the formation of God's people, that spiritual ministers (servants) of the people should be provided for by those who they serve (e.g. *Deuteronomy 18:1-5*). In the early church, time and again Paul is found both thanking and encouraging the churches for their financial support of both his own and other missionary's Gospel work (e.g. *Romans 15:25-29*, *1 Corinthians 9:3-14*). In *3 John*, we are encouraged to see the significance and great opportunity afforded by our giving as our financial partnership in the gospel means that we become a 'fellow worker for the truth' (*3 John 1:5-8*). Moving outwards in our circle of responsibilities, we are encouraged to care for the poor in the world, especially poorer churches (cf. *2 Corinthians 8*).

BUT HOW MUCH SHOULD I GIVE?

There is no 'right' answer on this one, but there are some challenging principles. We are encouraged to be generous. Why generous? It is not difficult to see why.

God has lavished the riches of his grace upon us in the gospel of salvation. (*Ephesians 2:7-10, Philipians 4:19-20*)

More than this, we are encouraged to be audaciously generous. It is not about the amount we give to gospel work, but rather, it is about our attitude and generosity with what we have. Jesus commends the actions of a poor widow for putting two small copper coins in an offertory box and condemns the offerings of the rich since he knows how costly this donation was for the widow. Of the rich he says, 'they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.' (*Luke 21:1-4*).

Jesus asks us to literally give up our private ambitions and idealised picture of chasing a career, wealth and all that this entails and 'lose it', so that we might save our true life by following him (e.g. *Mark 8:34-38*). Sometimes the 'tithing' (ten percent of our income) principle is used by some Christians to guide their giving. Whilst this might match true generosity for some of us, for many of us, it may not. We who live here

in Sydney, Australia, are certainly the rich of this age, whether we like it or not (*see 1 Timothy 6:17*).

Lastly, our generosity will only arise from a cheerful heart. We are not to give reluctantly, or under compulsion (*2 Corinthians 9:6ff*). We are to take joy in our giving, knowing the steadfast love and rich blessings towards us from the one we serve!

CAN I GIVE ANONYMOUSLY?

Certainly. When using direct debit, just make the reference out as (say) 'Anon Giving'. The only down-side to this style of reference is that in the event that you change your giving details, for the admin team to give you confirmation, they won't be able to identify you in any way. In this case, you might consider using 'Anon-Giving-345' (say) so that if you would like the admin team to discretely check what is coming through to the SGCS account, they can do so, but in normal practice, your giving will be anonymous. To be clear, access to the account is limited and we treat giving information with extreme care.

IS IT MORE HELPFUL TO GIVE IN A ONE-OFF WAY EACH YEAR OR REGULARLY?

This is a matter of freedom, of course, but there are some good reasons why you might consider regular donations. First, regular donations

do help the leadership team with managing cash-flow for SGCS. One-off donations are still helpful, but harder to predict and so, make planning our cash-flow more difficult. Second, planning to give each month, or week, means that your own cash-flow is managed better. Third, committing to a monthly giving plan means a regular reminder of your financial partnership with the gospel work of SGCS on your bank statement; a good prompt to pray for the spread of the gospel by the ministry of SGCS.

HOW IS MY DONATION USED?

In short, for the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ at SGCS. Practically, like the early churches of Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, Galatia and the rest, Sovereign Grace Church, Sydney depends on the donations of its members for its running costs.

The SGCS budget is developed each year by the pastoral team, in consultation with the board of directors. The SGCS financial year is from January 1 to December 31 each year. The accounts of SGCS are professionally audited annually.

As a church without property or buildings, SGCS is in the fortunate position to spend the majority of its resources on gospel workers rather than painting, plaster and pavements!

As of mid 2015, SGCS will employ the equivalent of 3 full time staff who serve a combined community of just over 200 people. At modest wages, employment costs account for half of the annual SGCS budget. Around another 15% is expended on rental costs such as for our Sunday meeting venue, and the SGCS office space. The remainder of the budget is spent directly on ministry initiatives and support. If you have any questions at all about the budget, or would like to see a more detailed version, please email the office at info@sovgrace.org.au

CAN I GIVE TO SPECIFIC MINISTRIES?

Whilst it might seem attractive for an individual to support one ministry instead of another, this is not how the Bible represents life in a church community. There are various illustrations used to express the local gathering of believers in the New Testament, but perhaps the most well-known is that of a 'body' of believers. In this spirit, at SGCS we firmly uphold the unity of believers (e.g. *Ephesians 4*), the mutual dependance of the body (e.g. *1 Corinthians 12*), and the authority and responsibility of the eldership to shepherd the flock (e.g. *1 Timothy 3*).

For this reason, decisions about how money is allocated to specific ministries at SGCS are made by the

pastoral team in consultation with the board of directors before each financial year. These decisions are reviewed periodically.

As such, we ask that you prayerfully commit to the shared vision and ministry activities of SGCS. If you have specific comments or suggestions about the budget, the pastoral team would be happy to hear from you.

IS GIVING TAX DEDUCTIBLE?

No. Whilst the Australian Taxation Office provides church groups like SGCS with a number of helpful benefits, tax deductibility (deductible gift recipient) status is not one of them. This is the same for any religious entity in Australia.

HOW CAN I GET FINANCIAL HELP?

If you're having financial difficulties and would like some help with budgeting you can email us at info@sovgrace.org.au to speak to one of the pastoral team.

