

WORD OF CHRIST INTERNATIONAL CHURCH
POSITION PAPER

Topic: Giving In Secret

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

We must agree that Scripture is our final authority in settling questions of faith and practice. But when born-again, Spirit-filled Christians, following proper biblical principles, come to reasonable but differing interpretations; we do well not to become dogmatic in support of one position. We affirm the inerrancy and authority of Scripture and we desire to know for certain what God expects of us. When we come to a sure understanding of His divine Word, we are committed to declaring and obeying those clear instructions.

In the following position paper we address one of many topics that have raised a fair degree of discussion, and, at times, arguments among the brethren. It is not our intention to fuel these arguments but rather to state our position based on our earnest understanding of the Scriptures. With this said, we also exercise caution in not stirring unnecessary strife or division among the brethren, and have made every reasonable effort to base our positions on Scripture, not personal opinion or conjecture. We respect and love our brothers and sisters who hold alternative interpretations on issues that are not critical to our salvation or standing before God.

GIVING IN SECRET

Below is Pastor Vin's response to an email he received from a brother in Christ who stated that it was inappropriate and unscriptural for believers to be seen making an offering in a public setting, such as a church service. He further said it was inappropriate to track offerings using tithing envelopes, as that is also a form of prideful posturing. The emailer based his position on Matt 6:3-4, which says *"But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."*

A RESPONSE FROM PASTOR VIN

By your reference to Matt 6, I'm assuming that you believe that "giving" should be in secret. I understand why you may take this position, but I believe it is derived from this passage out of context. In Matthew 6 Jesus dealt with motives, something the religious elite failed to examine.

He starts with the broad category of "acts of righteousness," then moves to three such acts - giving, prayer and fasting. The most important verse, the one that sets up the entire passage, is the first: "Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them". The operative phrase is "to be seen by them." This isn't a prohibition for others becoming aware of your giving, prayers, fasting, etc. ... rather, it's a command not to do these things solely to receive the recognition of men. If it meant anything else, then we should never pray in public.

Jesus says, "If you do [that is, if you do good things to win human approval], then you will have no reward from your Father in heaven." It's not long after this account that Jesus goes to the synagogue and intentionally sits near the treasury to watch what people were giving ... that's when He acknowledged the widow who gave two mites (Mark 12). He mentions this woman's gift publicly to His disciples. If the point of Matt 6 was to give in secrecy, then Jesus would have been violating His own command in Mark 12 ... that's why I believe the point was more a 'matter of the heart' than 'secrecy of the act'.

With this said, I do believe it is important to know and therefore to recognize those who labor among you (Paul says this in 1 Th 5:12). I believe giving in support of a project, event or need

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that is designed to expand the Kingdom of God is as much 'labor' as volunteering your time to a cause. Jesus also said where your treasure is that's where your heart is ... and it's important to know the state of the heart of those around you who are embracing and running with a vision God has given.

I hope this makes sense and helps you understand our position on this matter. Again, thank you for your email and for your honesty.

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