

LAW VERSUS GRACE (49)

QUESTION #59 – What are some good Biblical questions to ask in regard to any gray area before participating or exercising our liberty?

There are eight valid Biblical questions we may ask ourselves in regard to any gray area issue. Although we cannot classify them as legal rules, they are good Grace Age guidelines.

Question #1 - Is this forbidden in the Scripture? **I John 5:2**

Obedying the Word of God should be our first priority. It is critical for our own assurance and it is a demonstration of the fact that we love God. So this is a good question to ask.

Question #2 - Can this action be done in the name of Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God for it?
Col. 3:17

Can we thank God for what we are about to do and would what we are about to do in any way hurt the name of Jesus Christ?

Question #3 - Can this action be done to and for the glory of God? **I Cor. 10:31**

Since in whatever we do we are to glorify God, this is a very legitimate question to ask.

Question #4 - Would this action be likely to bring me commendation or condemnation at the Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ? **II Cor. 5:9-10; Rom. 14:10**

Question #5 - If Jesus Christ were to return and rapture us at the moment I am involved in this activity, would it make me confident or ashamed to face Him? **I John 2:28**

Question #6 - Am I having major doubts within my own conscience about using my liberty this way? **Rom. 14:23**

Question #7 - Would this use of liberty actually be something that would enhance that which is spiritual or that which is of the flesh? **Gal. 5:13**

Question #8 - Would this use of liberty at this moment cause a weaker brother to stumble?
Rom. 14:21; I Cor. 8:10, 13

If one is willing to face any gray area and is willing to ask and answer these questions, then one does have personal liberty in Christ to make his or her own decisions.

The proper use of any Christian liberty is to use it and enjoy it in such a way that we are not a slave to anything except the will of God.

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QUESTION #60 – Since we are not under law but under grace, how does this relate to the subject of tithing and giving?

When one reads the New Testament, it becomes quite clear that even in the Grace Age, giving money to the Lord's work is a very important act in the mind of God. This may be easily proved by several Church Age passages: **Rom. 12:8; II Cor. 8:1-5; 9:7; Gal. 6:6; Philip. 4:14-18; I John 3:17-18**. Obviously giving money is an important part of a believer's life, service, stewardship and worship. Having observed these words, the New Testament Grace Age believer will naturally ask the question, how should we give or how much should we give?

We begin this part of the study by dogmatically stating, **the basis for determining how much we give is not the Mosaic Law! (Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:18)**. Hopefully by this point in our study, we have become fully and Biblically persuaded that we are not under law, but under grace. So any legal "tithing" mandate is not our obligation.

QUESTION #61 – What was giving like under the O.T. law?

Under the Old Testament law, God directed Israel to give several different tithes to Him. An O.T. tithe was ten percent of the total gross income, not the net. When one considers all of the legal requirements, the percentage of actual tithing on the gross income was near 30 percent.

- 1) There was an annual tithe that was to be given to the Levites from all the crops, fruit and herds. **Lev. 27:30-34; Num. 18:21**
- 2) There was a second tithe of herds and crops brought to various worship points during sacred festivals every year. **Deut. 14:22-26**
- 3) There was a third tithe which was given every three years to support the local Levite and also help take care of the alien, orphan and widow. **Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-14**
- 4) There were also various sacrifices that were offered throughout the year. **Lev. 1-7**

God promised Israel that if she would give this to Him, He would bless her in her land to the point that all the nations of the world would testify of the amazing blessings of God which would be overflowing with increase (**Mal. 3:8-12**).

QUESTION #62 – Were there any tithes given before the O.T. law was given?

The answer is Yes! Prior to the giving of the O.T. law to Israel, there are evidences that Abram gave Melchizedek ten percent of everything he had out of gratitude for all of the blessings God had given him—**Gen. 14:20**. Later, Jacob promised that he would also give ten percent of all God had given to him—**Gen. 28:22**. Both of these instances are in the O.T. long before the O.T. law was given. They were voluntary offerings out of gratitude for all God had done and given. In both cases the amount was ten percent of the total gross of everything.

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QUESTION #63 – How should New Testament Grace Age believers give?

When it comes to N.T. Grace Age giving, I cannot find one text where Paul says, “I command you to give your money to God sacrificially” (**II Cor. 8:8-9**). The closest thing we get to a command is God’s directive that “those who proclaim the gospel should get their living from the gospel” (**I Cor. 9:14**). When it comes to giving, for the most part, man looks on the outward appearance, but not God. God looks at the internal heart. In the New Testament there are some key elements God sees:

Element #1 - God looks at the love for Him behind the offering. **II Cor. 8:8, 24**

He knows whether an offering is being given because people love Him or because people think they just have to do it.

Element #2 - God looks at the level of sacrifice in giving the offering. **Luke 21:1-4; II Cor. 8:2-3**

One person giving a small amount could actually be giving far more sacrificially than a person who gave a large amount.

Element #3 - God looks at the readiness and the willingness to give the offering. **II Cor. 8:8-12**

Some come to services with an eagerness to give their offering to the Lord and others come almost begrudging the offering plate.

Element #4 - God looks at the level of generosity behind the offering. **II Cor. 9:6; 8:2-5**

God knows the size of the offering, whether it is generous or stingy.

Element #5 - God looks at the mental resoluteness behind each offering. **II Cor. 9:7**

God knows what our convictions and purposes are concerning what we should give.

Element #6 - God looks at the cheerfulness we have in giving our offering. **II Cor. 9:7**

God loves at the highest level ($\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\alpha\omega$) the one who cheerfully gives their offerings to His work.

Element #7 - God looks at the trust and confidence one has when he gives the offering. **II Cor. 9:8**

God sees the faith and trust in Him involved in giving the offering.

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Element #8 - God looks at the systematic plan and planning behind the offering. **I Cor. 16:2**

Every Sunday one should have carefully calculated what will be given. **This point is critical because it negates any offering being taken or given under emotional pressure or coercion.**

Element #9 - God looks at the total financial prosperity level behind the offering. **I Cor. 16:2**

God knows who gives what based on what they have. He is the One who has allowed one to prosper and He is the One who is in a position to analyze an offering based on the prosperity level.

We must remember that under grace, giving is not simply mathematical percentage calculation or some legal debt we must pay or some impulsive response to an emotional appeal. **Under grace, God wants us to carefully assess all the financial blessings He has given to us and give accordingly.** It would appear to me that in this matter of giving, God wants us in this Grace Age to be looking to Him as to how we may be responsible stewards with what He has given to us. This is why each person must make his own determinations. Each individual, each couple must make their own determination (**I Cor. 16:2**).

We must carefully think through how much we have, how much we need to live on and pay our bills and provide for our family and then calculate what a good, sacrificial, well-pleasing offering would be to God. This kind of thinking pleases God and will bring many blessings from God.

QUESTION #64 – Has God promised Grace Age believers that there will be special blessings for those who give in these ways?

If we are honest with the Bible, the answer is Yes! God has specifically promised in the context of New Testament giving that one will reap what they sow (**II Cor. 9:6**). **There is no place in the Grace Age teaching where God promises blessings to those who give miserly.**

God has promised that one who gives following His principles will be enriched in everything (**II Cor. 9:11**). God promises that He will make all of His grace abound to one who gives cheerfully to Him (**II Cor. 9:8**).

Paul said to Grace Age believers that when believers give acceptable, sacrificial offerings to God, it is well-pleasing to the Lord and that God has promised He will supply all things we need according to His riches (**Philip. 4:18-19**).

God says that one who trusts in God and keeps his sights fixed on the eternal and generously gives of their substance will store up wonderful treasures in heaven (**I Tim. 6:17-19**).

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