

## “Everything and Everyone”

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From Exodus 25 onwards, Israel's task would be to build the tabernacle, that is, the House of God, His dwelling place. Similarly, the task of the Christian today is not simply to be a farmer, nor a salesman, nor an educator, nor any other way of earning a living. He must also be busy building the church, which is the home of God (1 Corinthians 3.16) and his temple (Ephesians 2:19–22).

How can we be successful in building the house of God? Following the example of God's people who successfully built the tabernacle. They were successful because many were “generous at heart.” Likewise, the key to building the church and making it grow today is to have generous hearts. The generous hearts of God's People and their willingness to give are an example to us in three different ways.

**THEY GAVE VOLUNTARILY.** God urged each “generous of heart” individual to bring something as an “offering to Jehovah [...] gold, silver, bronze.” He went on to mention other goods the people could bring. Each one was to bring what he had to be used in the construction of the tabernacle. The people obeyed.

The generosity with which the people of Israel brought these offerings is impressive. The passage attributes their liberality to their generous hearts, and again and again says that they gave not because they had plenty, but because their spirits moved them to do so.

**THEY UNITED TO GIVE.** The level of participation of the people was impressive. There were many, not a few, who contributed. The passage highlights the participation of “all” the people. Among those mentioned as givers was every man whose heart moved, men as well as women, all the willing of heart, every man who had blue, purple, crimson ... everyone who offered an offering of silver, all the wise women of heart, all the women whose hearts moved them in wisdom and the children of Israel, men and women, all who had a willing heart.

**THEY GAVE WITH JOY.** The variety of the offerings was also impressive. Some gave gold, while others gave silver or bronze. Some gave cloth or animal skins or acacia wood that they owned. Some gave precious and semi-precious stones or spices or oils. Others used their God-given talents to spin the cloth that would be needed to build the tent. Each person gave not according to an arbitrary standard, but according to their ability, as their hearts moved them.

For God, the attitude with which we give is important. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 we read that God loves those who give cheerfully. This means that everything we give to Him or to people - our money, our time, or the use of our talents - we must do so with a joyful or joyful heart.

Giving out of obligation, to get attention, to avoid other people's criticism or to look good, is to have a wrong attitude before God. Giving with joy is a decision that is born in the heart. If we focus on what we don't have or how deserving it is to enjoy what we do have, our hearts are far from God's desire. We are on the right path when we recognize that God is the great giver and that everything belongs to him. Psalm 24 begins with the following words: ***The earth and everything in it belongs to the Lord, the world and all who live in it.***

For us this implies that we are stewards of what God allows us to enjoy each day. None of it belongs to us, so we should not hold on to it or consider it exclusively ours. God is the owner and we must be wise to use things as he wants, sharing with others as he moves us to do so. Our giving should reflect the Father's generosity and his love for others.

For the church to grow today—spiritually and numerically—its members must be willing to give intentionally. God wants us to give as the Israelites did. He wants us to give with generous hearts, willingly. He wants us all to contribute; giving is not something that only those who have plenty of money should do. Everyone can and should give. God wants us to give of what we have; Everyone must give according to how he has prospered. The widow's offering, given selflessly with a generous heart, was as appreciated by God as the burdensome offerings of the rich.

Whether the offering consists of a few loaves for Jesus to multiply, a colt for him to ride, or a valuable vessel of perfume with which to anoint him, the Lord is pleased to receive whatever we can give him. Every member should give liberally and generously in order to build up the church.

The only kind of offering approved by the Lord is that which is given voluntarily, generously, deliberately and selflessly!