

Keeping

READING

Matthew 6

Romans 12

1 Peter 4:7-11

Luke 21

One of our modern Christian misconceptions is that we own things. Everything we have, all the stuff we think we own, all the income we receive, all of it, is not ours. It all belongs to God.

Usually this topic has been called “Giving”, but for Christians it is much more useful to have in mind, “How much are you keeping?”.

But first let’s deal with the whole 10% thing.

For the Jews in Old Testament times God told them to give 10% of their harvest, calves, lambs, etc... to the Levites.

Basically a tithe of their money which was seen to be given to God because it was given to his priests for the running of the temple, and for their daily needs.

On top of that, they were also told to care for the poor. And occasionally to give for special reasons.

So, really 10% was just the mandatory starting point for them.

But this was a law for Jews. Useful information, but not a law for Christians.

Read the article [Rules for Christian Living](#) for more detail on why this is not a law for Christians.

Christians are told a lot about giving.

When you give, do it in secret.

When you give, give what it is in your heart to give so you can give cheerfully and not reluctantly.

When you give, give generously.

I don’t think we struggle with any of this.

The question I always hear about giving is, “How much do I have to give?”.

The short answer is... zero.

You don’t **have** to give anything.

The long answer is... zero.

You don’t **have** anything to give.

Read carefully if you missed it. They’re different.

One of our modern Christian misconceptions is that we own things.

Everything we have, all the stuff we think we own, all the income we receive, all of it, is not ours. It all belongs to God.

God has simply given it to us to look after for him.

We are stewards. A steward is someone who looks after someone else’s property or money.

Get it? It’s all God’s money. We have just been entrusted with looking after some of it.

If you “get” this, it will change your whole attitude to giving.

Instead of thinking of giving, you will think of keeping.

Of course God expects you to keep some to provide for your own needs, and those of your family.

But most modern Christians that I have talked with keep 90% of what God has entrusted them with.

Now, before we get all high and mighty about that. Remember that each Christian should give what they have decided in their own heart.

It’s not up to you to tell anyone else how much to keep.

It’s God’s money, if he thinks they are keeping too much he can deal with them.

But how about you?

Do you think you are keeping too much?

If God asked you to explain why you kept so much for yourself would you feel comfortable?

Do you think you are being generous?

One day Yeshua watched people giving at the temple. (In those days they had a big box for giving, and didn’t “pass the plate/bag” like we do now).

The rich man made a big fuss about putting in 10% of his fortune.

The poor widow humbly put in 2 small copper coins, but it was all she had to live on.

Yeshua said, she gave much more.

We can think of it like a pie... he gave one slice of his pie, but she gave the whole pie.

But it’s not even that really.

Giving 2 slices of your pie might still not be generous for you.

Giving half a slice of pie might already be very generous for you.

It depends on your situation, and how much you have, and how much you need.

To put it in “keeping” terms, it depends on how much you keep for yourself, but even then, you might need to keep more than I do.

Ultimately, it depends on **why** you are giving. And **why** you are keeping so much.

Just like every action for Christians. It does not matter what you do. It matters why you do it.

Are you being generous? Are you being selfish?

Are you cheerful about giving?

Or are you struggling to give because you love money?

Are you reluctant to give because you rely on money for your security instead of relying on God?

So, how much should you give?

First, think of how much you keep, not how much you give. And develop the attitude that it’s not your money. This will help you keep a loose hold on money, and give it a loose hold on you.

And then you will be free to give and you will be able to keep giving until you feel like you have been generous.

And then, when you feel like you are generous. You will be able to give even more, cheerfully.