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If You Had \$100 to Donate, How Would You Decide Who to Give It To?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to decide which ministry or organization to donate to and whether one should support ministries and non-profits that do good work but treat their employees and volunteers horribly.

* With all the ministries, organizations, and needs out there, if you had \$100 to donate to something, how would you decide who to give it to?

* What do you think about supporting ministries and non-profits that do good work but treat their employees and volunteers horribly?

Transcript

[Music] [Bell] I'm Amy Hall and you're listening to Stand to Reason's #STRask podcast. And I'm here with Greg Koukl. Good morning.

Hello, Greg. Our first question, Greg, comes from MatchlessM. In fact, we have a couple questions from him that are very closely related.

So I'll start with the first one. If you had \$100 to donate to something, who would you give it to? There are many ministries, organizations, and needs. How do you prioritize local church first, missionaries? Also, does tithing always have to go to your church? All right.

This is a good question, very practical. And it reflects, at least the way it was asked, misunderstanding. The word "tithing" could mean "tenting" in the biblical sense.

And it could be a stand-in for giving. And so a lot of New Testament Christians will refer to their giving, regardless of the percentage, as "tithing", which means a tenth. So first point of clarification.

There is no biblical obligation for Christians to tithe. Tithing was a function of the Mosaic

Law, which was a contract that God made with the Jews in order to establish the Commonwealth of Israel. Now, there are all kinds of details in the law.

People will make distinctions between the moral law, the ceremonial law, and the civil law. But these were all, by the way, morally incumbent upon the Jews. And so there were all moral laws to the Jews, because it was a contract with the Jews that God did not make with Gentiles.

So the none of the provisions of the Mosaic Law apply to Gentiles or any others no longer under that law, which means no one else. That is, the provisions of that law, as such, don't apply to anyone else. Now, we've talked about this before.

In any law, there are going to be universals that are expressed, that are moral and character. So the laws of Illinois do not have any bearing on me in California. The law in Illinois against homicide.

It's not incumbent on me to pay that one in California, because I'm not in that jurisdiction. Illinois, but California has its own homicide law. And that's because every homicide drawing universally, all right.

So I'm not taking exception with the moral, a lot of moral things that are in the law, but they're there because the universals. But tithing is not one of those. Tithing is a provision of the law to provide tax and economic relief to the Commonwealth.

And in fact, as John MacArthur has pointed out, when you look at all of the requirements, it's actually more than 10%, because there are different demands about giving in different circumstances. And it turns out to be quite a bit more than 10%. If people want to give 10%, there's nothing wrong with that, of course.

But the question is whether we are morally obliged to do so. And the only time tithing is mentioned in the New Testament is when Jesus says, you should tithe in Matthew 25 or thereabouts. He tells that to the Jews, but at the beginning of the chapter, he tells them to keep the whole law.

Do everything that the scribes and Pharisees tell you to do. Just don't do like they do. Keep the Mosaic law because they were still under that economy.

Okay. So tithing is for the Commonwealth of Israel. Now, the New Testament principle is giving.

And we give as the Lord has prospered us with a cheerful heart. It's up to us. Okay.

So that's one clarification. So I'm just, he might have met, a matchless might have met the word tithing, just as a euphemism or a synonym for giving. So let's just talk about New Testament giving.

In Galatians 6, it says that, "Let him who is taught share all good things with him who teaches." Okay. And that is a passage about economics. So the idea is, is that we give financially to support those who feed us.

Okay. Local church, first and foremost, if you're in a local church, you have a local community there of people, of an organization that needs financial means. And that means comes from the people who the church serves.

So giving to that church, given that you're being fed there, is completely appropriate and biblical. Okay. Now, some people may not be in a local church.

All right. But they're being fed in a different fashion, a different kind of fellowship or whatever. Some people are fed principally from stantier reason.

All right. Nothing wrong with that. I think if they're not involved in a community, a local community where you know, you're face to face in together, that's what God desires.

Okay. Characteristically, that's a local church. But if stantier reason or any other 501(c)(3) is feeding someone, then it's appropriate for them to respond by giving back.

Let him who is taught share all good things with him who teaches. That's the principle. Okay.

Principle is giving generously with it as God has prospered us with a cheerful heart to those who feed us. That's the New Testament principle. Now, within that, there's lots of latitude and you're not limited to those who feed you because we're to help the poor.

What is the best means to help the poor? The best means to help the poor organizations that are designed to do that well. And so my wife and I, we give to the Orange County Rescue Mission. We know how that operates.

We know the Christian principles. We know the people who run it. Natasha Crane's husband is a principal there and many know Natasha from the books that she's written.

And so when we give there, we know we're not giving where we're being fed there. We're giving charity there. That's a different type of giving and we're obliged to do that in terms of giving.

There are other responsibilities of giving we have where we're being fed and others who don't, who have genuine needs. And so in fact, this is why Paul says in 2 Thessalonians, I think that we ought to be working with our hands and providing for ourselves and for those who have other need, genuine need. So we should be living below our means so that we have extra for those who have genuine need.

That's charity. Okay. So, but the decision about where we give us completely up to us, I don't see any, any obligation other than where you're being fed, which characteristically

is a local church, that's your local community of Christians and where you have personal community and where you're being fed in various ways.

So that's where part of your giving should go there. But I had a friend contact me recently who was told by another Christian who I know and respect that 501(c)(3)s are not like ours and others. Religious nonprofits aren't the church because we're not a local body.

And the fact is we are all part of the church. It just mystifies me. We are serving the needs of local churches in a way that they can't provide for themselves because it's a specialized need.

And there are lots of people who do this. And this is why we have religious nonprofits. They are no, they are not a local church.

Got it. But they are no, what local church did Paul belong to? Just curious. He's traveled.

He was a 501(c)(3) religious nonprofit is what he was. He's traveling all around doing all these different things. It first just occurred to be just no as an illustration.

And all the other traveling apostles, they weren't part of a local church. They had a community of believers that were with them and they connected with and they were built up by and encouraged by, but they weren't part of a local church. Other churches supported them.

And we have instances in the New Testament which describes that. So there's no reason to arbitrarily, I think, there's no theological reason to exclude a religious nonprofits from the larger body of Christ as if when you give to them you're not giving to the body of Christ. You are.

You're given to a facet of it. And circumstances have changed, by the way. We, from the first century, they had home churches.

Now, we have separate buildings that are churches. That doesn't mean we're not the church, just because there's some difference in the way we meet together that is adapted to the changing culture. So, anyway, so those are the key here is you're not obliged to tithe, but you are obliged to give.

Generously, where you're fed and charitably. And you can decide where you want to give charitably. But the first need is to give where you're fed.

Tithing, I know pastors are pounding the podium all the time about tithing. You're robbing from God, Malachi. No, we're not.

That is not an obligation that we have before God. That is a old covenant obligation regarding the common wealth of Israel and that distinction should be made more often.

Does it mean we're off the hook for giving? Giving is the New Testament pattern, not tithing.

I think my answer is very similar to yours in a lot of ways, Greg. The way I look at giving is I look at it as a discipline and I treat it as a discipline. So, I have certain ways that I go about it and you struck on some of the things I had written down here.

The local church that you are a part of, the community that you're a part of, that is the foundation. So, generally, what I do is I have a percentage in mind and I do that every week. You don't have to think about it.

It's a discipline. It's something you've already decided and you do that week by week. And then I have second here is the people who are spiritually feeding you.

And for those, there are certain organizations that I give to the same amount every month. So, again, it's a discipline. It's something I decided to give in addition to my local church.

And then for the third category, actually, this third category is just, it's not necessarily a separate one from the second category, but it's where your interest meets need. So, this is the way I look at it. We all have different gifts and different interests.

That's part of being the body of Christ. And we all are working to do different things in the body of Christ. So, what is it that you are interested in providing to the body of Christ? It might be something that you're good at.

It might be something that you benefit from. It might be something that just catches your eye for whatever reason. And that's the people that you give to.

So, for example, I'm very interested in obviously the topics we talk about. So, pro-life things, things, organizations that educate people, those are ones that I will give to above and beyond these other things because I figure that this is where I fit into the body of Christ and I want to contribute to that. And of course, you mentioned the poor and I think we should all be contributing to that because that's a specific thing said in the New Testament that we are to be giving to.

So, I have a percentage to the local church. I have the regular giving to certain organizations, but I also leave aside a certain amount that I'm expecting to give by the end of the year that I just wait for needs. So, sometimes an organization will have a specific need or a friend.

It doesn't even have to be an organization. That's right. That's a very important distinction too.

Yeah. Sometimes you just pony up on behalf of a friend and you don't get the

deductions. So, what? That's not what this is about.

Right. Because part of being the body of Christ is that we are giving so that other fellow Christians are not in need. So, I always have things saved and then by the end of the year, I intend to use them for whatever reason.

And I see how much have I spent of this and then I consider all the organizations that I like to give to and then whatever's left, I will give to whoever's, you know, I haven't given to as much that year. So, I think there's definitely a lot of freedom here and a lot of, like you said, you're free to give to whomever you want. And I do that in terms of what I think my place in the body of Christ is.

You know, you mentioned you actually itemized a category that I'm committed to also, but I didn't clarify in my own comments. And I love the way you put it, where are our interests meet need? And I think of life training institutes. Scott, Scott Klusendorf's organization, well, we give to Scott every month.

We've been doing that for years and years and years. But that doesn't meet my need. He doesn't train me.

And it's not really charity either. Somebody else in need. It is something that I care about.

It's a moral issue and addressing that does help others. So he trains others to make the case for the pro life position. And there's a lot of other things like that too.

We appeal to stand a reason, folk, who are on our donor team, so to speak, that if we've helped you, then it's appropriate to give back. So we always try to give before we ask to receive. But if you want us to help others with what we do, like passing the baton to the next generation, our reality conferences and stuff like that, then those gifts help us to do that thing that we're capable of doing that maybe you're not in a position to do.

And so this is all in that broader category of where our interest meets need. So helping another missionary who's on the field, communicating the gospel in a country that we may not be able to go to, that is in that category. I want to help that missionary to do the work of ministry that I'm not able to do because I'm not there, but I can help out financially.

Missionaries who are spreading the gospel and the poor are obviously our obvious categories that we should be giving to. But there are a lot of organizations that are addressing worldview issues. And right now, the worldview issue, the worldview divide in this country and in the world is huge.

And there are so many, there's so much suffering that results from false worldviews. So every time you are giving to an organization that is working to help people to understand

the truth in these major areas about what it means to be human, about what it means about gender, about life, about intrinsic value of human beings, all of those things will make a huge difference over time in the culture. As will the gospel, obviously that goes without saying that is the that is the foundational level of what we're giving to.

But don't miss the fact that even giving to these other things that are training people and training Christians are making a huge difference. Or think of organizations like the Alliance for Defending Freedom or Freedom First. These are pro bono legal organizations, that is they give their services for free to defend common liberties that we have that allow us to flourish as human beings we got desired and allows us to communicate the gospel most freely.

And so when our fundamental liberties are taken away from us, if we don't have people like that to defend us to secure those liberties, then greater goods can't be accomplished. So even so there's an example way to say that they're not feeding me ADF, Alliance for Defending Freedom, that they're not feeding me, that's not really charity, but it is something that the body of Christ is doing to secure goods for believers and for the kingdom itself. Even though it's maybe a step removed from those goods, not like giving money to a missionary or to an organization that's feeding people.

Nevertheless, those are still vital, they occupy vital positions in the whole kind of the kingdom chain as it were, and it's completely legitimate to give to those organizations as part of your charitable giving broadly put. And in fact, I've stepped up our giving there to those organizations of late just because of the kinds of liberties that are on the chopping block right now that will have significant and are having significant impact on the freedom of Christians to speak openly. And this is where it comes back to, again, to people's interests because people could have all sorts of interests, you could have music interests, you could have art interests, and all of these things could have charities or non-profits that are doing work that are related to your interests.

So all those things you can consider as you're giving. So now let's go on to his follow-up question. What do you think about supporting ministries and non-profits that do good work but treat their employees and volunteers horribly? Do the ends justify the means? Well, yeah, that's a good question.

And I think there's going to be that kind of, my answer is going to be that depends. It depends what one means by horrible treatment. For example, some enterprises are just a little bit more rigorous and chintzy or scotch or dutch or whatever you want to call it than others.

It's not been my philosophy, it's standard reason. We never try to squeeze our workers because we want our workers to be happy and work well and not go elsewhere. But sometimes there's an attitude that way.

Sometimes there's leadership that's just difficult to work with. If there is real serious abuse going on, well, that's another issue. I think this is going to be a judgment call based on how much visibility you have of actually what's going on.

And I don't look at the end of doing some good thing in the community for the kingdom is not justified by the means of nasty people. But of course, nasty people aren't the means, they're just the environment where that happens. They could be nice.

The organization is the means. The nasty people are just nasty. Now, if you don't like giving to an organization that's doing good work and has nasty people, I suggest you find an organization that does good work and as nice people as far as you can tell.

If you are not comfortable with something about the organization, don't give money to them. There are plenty of organizations that will qualify for good work and good people to give your money to. I probably, if there was an organization and I'm thinking of one right now that I no longer give to, I'm not going to mention it because I don't want to disparage them publicly on this particular issue.

But my understanding is the leadership is pretty, what's the right word, totalitarian, and that's not good, even though what they may be doing is good in terms of what they're trying to produce in their ministry, their work. But my response as a donor, no, I'm not going to participate then. I'll give it to someone else who is more deserving.

They're doing good work and they're good people. I think that's an individual choice. I don't think the means, ends equation applies in quite the same way.

It isn't by bad means they're accomplishing the end. It is just nasty people who are using legitimate means like donations and distribution patterns and stuff like that. They're not doing anything immoral in terms of the operation of the organization, but the people in the way they lead are not being virtuous.

So I think there's a distinction there. Well, the nice thing about living in our society where we have access to organizations all over the world is that you don't have to give to these organizations. There's always somebody else doing that work that you can reach out to and give to because I would not want if I knew for a fact that something was going on and people were being treated badly at that organization, I wouldn't want to give to them.

A big reason would be they're representing Christ to the world and they're interacting with people outside of their organization. Everyone has to. You have to get supplies.

You have to have people to come clean your offices. There's all sorts of things, all sorts of people you're interacting with. I don't want to support someone as a representative of Christ who's going to represent him badly.

So I would just give to someone else. I think that's a pretty easy thing to do. I agree.

All right, Greg, we're out of time. Are we out of questions from Mashlessim? Thank you for your two questions. We appreciate that.

If you'd like to send in a question, just go to Twitter. You can send your question in with #strask or you can go to our website. If you go to our podcast page and go to the #strask page, you'll see a link there where you can send us a question.

Just make sure it's the size of a tweet, which is about two sentences. It's a lot smaller than people think. Confitting your pocket.

Well, thank you for listening. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cocle for Stand to Reason.

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