1ST OF JANUARY 2018

**THE ART OF GIVING.**

Apostle Paul in 2 Cor 9:7 says:
**"You must each decide in your heart how much to give, don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves a person who gives cheerfully"**My family and I attended a Church service, different from our usual Church while in Lagos during the last holiday.

I always prefer to stay under the covering of my own Church (denomination) wherever I find myself both home and abroad; but I succumbed to the request of my wife, who happens to be a fan of this other Church.
I thought it won't be a bad idea to see how it is done elsewhere; since this other Church is also a known Bible -believing Church
.
The Sermon was quite inspiring, coupled with the eloquence of the Pastor. Everything went well until it was time to give offering.

Sequel to my background (Churches I have attended : both orthodox & Pentecostal)and my little understanding of the word of God; I stood up with the assumption that  it was time to start dancing before God.

Surprisingly, I was wrong. I was about the only one standing; then I realised they give offering sitting down in that Church.

After the service, the issue became a talking point between my wife and I.
She tried to justify the style that it's about what one is used to, but I was not convinced.

As we picked up the children from the Children's church; they started grumbling:

*" Can you imagine they took the offering without music while we sat down, isn't that wierd*"

Incredibly, the children complained without prior knowledge of the discussion I had with their mum earlier.

It became apparent to me and further affirms the notion that God is interested in the way we give.

That experience triggered this write up: "The Art of Giving".

I mean expressing one's feelings through giving.

Giving is a form of worship. This was exhibited by the wise men who gave gift to Jesus ; Mathew 2:11.

The following are principles that guide our giving as illustrated in 2 Cor 9:7:
(1) Biblical Giving is based on personal decision.
"You must each decide in your heart"

Your decision on how much to give is your prerogative. It is strictly between you and God; no other person has the right to know or has a say in the decision making for you. Romans 14:22.

(2) Giving should be free will (voluntary): "not reluctantly"

**"For if the willingness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what one does not have".-**2 Cor 8:12.

How does one reconcile this verse with the one that says "You do not come to the house of God empty handed"- Deu 16:16 (which is very popular in churches now).

We do not serve a cruel God; but a just God.

My Lord Jesus knows there are many that do not have; otherwise it will amount to shutting the door of the Church against the poor who needs salvation. Luke 4:18.

God does not want us to be traumatised (giving painfully) when we give but rather sacrificially by faith.

He revealed this by sacrificing Jesus for the sins of mankind. John:3:16.

Every pastor has to draw a line between selfish ambition and God's instructions.

In 2 Samuel 7: God told David he is not the one to build the temple despite David's good intention.

Have you ever wondered why there are many Churches with  Campsites; mostly non functional on the Lagos-Ibadan Express way but only one stands out from the pack?

Food for thought!

(3)Giving should not be done out of compulsion or coercion.

"Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of thy God which He hath given thee". Deu 16:17

Moses in Exodus 36: 6 actually told the people not to give anymore after many people have brought more than what was needed.

The kind of **"forceful funds raising ministration"** that goes on in churches these days have kept many souls away from the Church.

(4)Biblical giving is to God and when you do; it has a promise.

Prov 3:9-10.
Mal. 3:10.

Although God is self-sufficient. Psalm  50:10-12.

He expects us to give him our quality time and money for the furderance of His kingdom. Col. 3:23& 24.

David in 2 Samuel 24:24 said :
**"I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offering that cost me nothing".**

Believers should be kindhearted to everyone around them. Especially the brokenhearted (orphans & widows).

Whoever is kind to the needy lends to the Lord  He will reward them for what they have done. Prov 19:17.

There is a dangerous aberration going on in the Christendom now; where some have an erroneous impression that they can give fat offering to God  out of proceeds of a ill-gotten wealth and get mercy in return.

**Don't be deceived God is not mocked**... Gal 6:7.

Such people  might have given to a "Gahazi"not God.
2 Kings 5:15-27.

Prov 15:8- **"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord"**

(5)God loves it when we give cheerfully.

Being cheerful is an expression of internal and external feelings

Growing up as a teenager in one of the orthodox churches was not fun for me and my brothers. Soon after we became born again; we escaped to a Pentecostal church.
However, I always have  admiration for the cheerful mode of giving offering in the orthodox church up till now.

One will easily forgets one's  worries while dancing joyfully before God.

In Mathew 6:1, Our Lord Jesus  laid down core principle about the way we give:

**"Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven".**
Giving in order to be praised is a sign of men pleasing & self- centeredness.

Apostle Paul says in Gal-1:10:
**"I am not trying to win the approval of men, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I will not be Christ's servant".

“For the poor shall never cease out of the land; I command thee to open thine hand wide to the poor”.** Deu 15:11.

Hence, giving is a command from God and we must obey.

Finally, someone  once said:
*"we make a living by what we get but make a life by what we give".*Jesus concludes the whole matter**: "it is more blessed to give than to receive"**.

Acts 30:35.

Wishing you a happy and fulfilling 2018.

Signed, Bro Cole