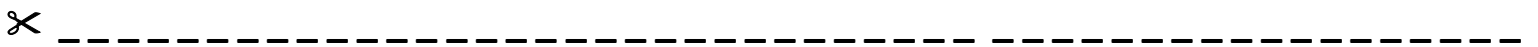


When Living Means Christ: Giving and Receiving - Philippians 4:12-20

As Paul wraps up his letter to the Philippians, he thanks them for their sharing with him "in the matter of giving and receiving." (v15) He makes it clear that in this area of concern all that we need is determined and supplied by God and His grace (v19). This awareness is what liberates us to demonstrate how grateful we are for all that God has graciously entrusted to us - we call that stewardship. As stewards (trustees), we realize all we have belongs to God. We are spiritual caretakers of (His) material goods - we do not "own" any of the assets or resources that we manage. He has the authority, therefore, to direct how they are invested and managed. Our oversight, caretaking, and investment of God's assets is a daily act of our worship. We learn to see ourselves (and all we have) as offerings to God and His world, to be utilized for His praise and not just for our pleasure.

In the process, God is growing us up to be Christ-like givers. We are cultivating a love - not a law - for giving (II Cor 5:14). New Testament references speak of giving willingly (II Cor 8:3; 9:7). A voluntary giving out of grace, not guilt, becomes the rule. It refers to giving generously (II Cor 8:2,3; 9:6). We give out of our hearts more than our bank accounts. The Bible speaks of giving cheerfully (II Cor 9:7). We give out of a sense of delight over mere duty. And, we read of giving sacrificially (II Cor 8:3) -a calculated readiness that gives out of love, not out of our leftovers.

There are indications of the need to give thoughtfully, intentionally, perhaps even systematically (I Cor 16:1-2). A prayerful and wisely planned management of resources, (II Cor 9:7 - "...as each has purposed in his heart...") surely seems to be a delight to God (Matt 25:14-30). While there is no set rule or method, no law or precise formula, when living means Christ we cannot help but be givers - willing, generous, joyful, sacrificial and intentional givers. ("Just as He is, so also are we in this world" - I Jo 4:17). While the "tithes" (10%) is certainly no authoritarian standard for Christian giving, many use it as a guide or benchmark for patterned, proportional giving. It is certainly a place for many to start the journey, but remember, God is not growing us up to be tithers, but to be Christ-like givers! See yourself as a steward, a caretaker of God's assets. Pray, think, seek counsel, investigate. Select a percentage or a dollar amount - give it with joy, with gladness... increase it from time to time... until you lose your joy. Back up just a bit and you many find yourself right where you need to be!



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GREETINGS

"In Christ" - a fixed New Testament concept? Pauline catch-phrase? Technical status of the believer? Locative, casual, or instrumental new covenant doctrine? Perhaps, but even more so, "in Christ" speaks inexhaustively about our living oneness with God through Christ. It denotes participation, identification, incorporation, fellowship, union... and much more!

First and foremost "in Christ" is about being united with a Person - not merely with a deity or with the eternal. It is certainly the starting point (and the end) of all things Christian! It is no mere figure of speech, but a living union, a participatory oneness with our Savior and our God.

In our Florida retreat (Feb 13-15), we will delve deeply into the ramifications, the implications, and the active participation of what it means to be in Christ. Hope you can join us this year. Please see the info below the calendar, or, call us for more details.

And thank you again for your continued encouragement and support. While still not quite at the place where I was in August, things as of this writing continue to improve and I've gone back to a somewhat normal schedule with only a few modifications. Your love and prayers have been a tremendous blessing! I deeply appreciate all your expressions of concern.

CALENDAR

DECEMBER

2 Ocala Study
7,14,21 CCF (no CCF service Dec 28)
9 Alachua Study



ALACHUA, FLORIDA WINTER RETREAT

"In Christ: Our Living Oneness"

Feb 13-15, 2015

\$280 couple (all inclusive)	Includes: lodging,
\$155 single (2 to a room)	conference fee
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