

# STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

## Biblical Advice for Cheerful Givers

*Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).*

We've been told this since our days in Sunday school: We need to give and we need to give gladly. But a spirit of generosity isn't enough to guide us in our decisions. What else does Scripture have to say on the subject?

Three kinds of financial giving are mentioned in the Bible: offerings, tithes and alms. Understanding what they mean helps us achieve a thoughtful, balanced plan for our cheerful giving.

### Offerings and Tithing

*On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come (1 Corinthians 16:2).*

The faith practice of making a regular financial offering to your congregation is grounded in a "first fruits" biblical principle. Your generosity is not an afterthought; it's part of your day-in-and-day-out joyful response as a child of God.

Tithing includes all undesignated giving and supports local ministries and outreach. Your congregation then shares a portion of your offering—mission support—with your synod and the churchwide expression. *Stories of Faith in Action* is filled with examples of how God changes people's lives through your mission support. It is God's work with our hands.

Offerings refer to giving that is above and beyond, and never in place of, your commitment to regular congregational giving, which many Christians talk about as a tithe. This helps you to differentiate between your financial commitment to your congregation and the special offerings you designate to specific causes. Such causes may include World Hunger, a program unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a congregation's building fund or a pan-Lutheran organization such as Lutheran World Relief. We encourage your designated support of these worthy causes.

For more *Stories of Faith in Action*, visit [www.elca.org/stories](http://www.elca.org/stories).  
Do you have a story to share? E-mail us at [stories@elca.org](mailto:stories@elca.org).



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

# STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

## Biblical Advice for Cheerful Givers (cont'd)

### Alms

*Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys (Luke 12:33).*

Alms are our compassionate, heartfelt response to the people Jesus mentioned in Matthew 25: those "least" of our sister and brothers who are "less" than we in circumstance only and always our equal in their humanity.

Example: This is our most personal and spontaneous kind of giving in response to people in need. Think about the homeless man you see everyday by the bus stop or the family in your congregation whose home was lost during a fire. Your outreach makes God's love for them feel very real and very immediate; your kindness reveals Christ's presence within them as well.

### Time and Talent

It's also important to remember that when we focus exclusively on giving in terms of money alone, we lose sight of the bigger picture. God calls us to be generous in all areas of our lives and invites us to explore the many opportunities to share ourselves through our time and talent.

When we ground our giving in a biblical context, our financial generosity becomes an expression of our love for God, for our neighbor and for ourselves. We are new people in Christ: compassionate and eager to share.

We give cheerfully because God has given us so much.

For more *Stories of Faith in Action*, visit [www.elca.org/stories](http://www.elca.org/stories).  
Do you have a story to share? E-mail us at [stories@elca.org](mailto:stories@elca.org).



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.