

# CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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## Are Cash Gifts the Best Gifts?

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Many people like to give special gifts to their churches or other ministries. Some people give offerings regularly through the year. Others work on commission or own a business and are not sure what their income will be until late in the year.

Consider these verses: "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing" (Proverbs 3:9-10a, NIV). We find from this passage that God not only likes charitable giving, but He blesses it. Is wealth the same thing as income? Not necessarily. Wealth has to do with all of the assets that you own. Income relates to the money you take home from your job that over time can be saved to produce wealth.

Many people will give an offering to the LORD from their income. But many Christians also accumulate significant assets over time by saving and investing what God has given them. Statistics reveal that only a small percentage of Christians will intentionally give an offering to the Lord during their lives in view of the appreciated value of their assets. Additionally, only 5% of Christians will include a gift to the Lord's work in their wills. The same God who blesses us with income also blesses us with appreciated assets such as houses, stocks, retirement funds, and other property. To properly honor the Lord, we must rethink our idea of wealth and how we will honor God in response to His blessing in our lives.

Those who would like to make a significant special gift are often hindered because they do not have much cash available. However, are cash gifts the best gifts? Often the answer is no. Consider the idea that you are going to give a \$5,000 gift to your local church or another ministry. If the gift is cash, the

gift "costs" you \$5,000. If the gift is stock for which you originally paid \$500, the gift "costs" you \$500 because you avoid paying \$4,500 in capital gains tax. However, the benefit to the ministry and the value on your tax return is \$5,000. The same can be done with real estate gifts. Gifts of appreciated assets can be a wonderful way to honor the Lord's work.

If the Lord leads you to give an appreciated asset, make sure the ministry has been ruled tax-exempt by the IRS. Once you contribute the property, the ministry is required to give you a tax-deductible receipt (for contributions greater than \$250) and a form 8283 when you contribute assets other than cash. This form lists your name, the ministry's name, and a description of the property. You are required to estimate the value of the contribution. For gifts of stock use the average market value on the day of the gift. For gifts such as land or other assets use an appraisal when possible.

Gifts of appreciated assets can be a wonderful way to honor the Lord's work. Give gifts to your local church first. Then consider gifts to other ministries that God is blessing. Contact BBC Foundation and ask for our information packet. Become a biblical steward. Honor God based on your wealth, not just your income!

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BBC Foundation has been ministering to churches and individuals regarding biblical stewardship since 1992. Send your questions on finances and stewardship to: BBC Foundation, 538 Venard Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411. Phone: (800) 451-8668, website: [bbcfoundation.org](http://bbcfoundation.org); e-mail: [info@bbcfoundation.org](mailto:info@bbcfoundation.org)