

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING OUR GIVING

It is important for Christians to evaluate their giving patterns to organizations outside their own local churches by considering other important guidelines that God gives us in the Scriptures. The following questions will assist believers in deciding whether or not to support a particular ministry outside their local church and, if so, how much they should give.

To what extent am I supporting those who are ministering to me and my family?

The Scriptures make it clear that we have a responsibility to first and foremost take care and encourage those Christians in **material ways** who have ministered to us in **spiritual ways**. If we give to other organizations and neglect the spiritual leaders in our local church, we are not operating within the will of God. (Romans 15:27; I Corinthians 9:7-15a; Galatians 6:6; I Timothy 5:17)

What percentage of our income should we give to our local churches before we consider supporting other Christian ministries?

Though certainly not an absolute guideline, the Old Testament provides us with a pragmatic example which may prove helpful. The children of Israel were to give their first 10 percent to support their spiritual leaders (Leviticus 27:30-34; Number 18:21-24) All other giving was in addition to this. A good rule of thumb may be for believers to give at least 10 percent of their income to their local churches before they support additional ministries. If Christians were committed to giving at least 10 percent to their local church, and then to give proportionally beyond this to other ministries, there would be few financial problems in local churches or parachurch ministries.

What kind of accountability system does the parachurch promote and practice?

A Christian should never give to any Christian organization that does not make special efforts to be totally accountable to its donors and to the Christian public at large. Such steps demonstrate that it is a credible organization and worthy of financial support.

What kind of reputation do the organization and its leaders have, both in their Christian community and in the world at large?

This reputation should be "above reproach" and should have been established and maintained for a lengthy period of time. If the organization is new, it is doubly important to consider the already established reputations of its founders and leaders.