

26.4.2020

Dear Church Family,

I recognise that we are doing our best to stay connected during these unusual restrictions and that some are beginning to think about how life will have changed once the restrictions are lifted: what will have happened to the church during the time we haven't been able to meet together? Will we have grown stronger or more flabby?

The daily exercise, for which the Government allows us to leave our homes, is a good metaphor for the daily spiritual exercise we need too. Through the news sheet and the website we have been encouraging people to keep on reading the Bible, praying, thinking about others, contacting others, and so on.

Another important spiritual exercise is how we go about our spending and giving. These times of restrictions will affect that in a number of ways, but let's make sure we are sticking to Biblical ways. I'm grateful to Pete Jackson of Kendray for the next few paragraphs.

Let's remind ourselves us of the six Biblical principles for our giving: it should be **sacrificial** and **generous, planned** and **proportionate, willing** and **cheerful**. All of these principles still apply even during the restrictions, but let me particularly say something about the 'planned' and 'proportionate' principles.

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Paul writes,

"Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

*Paul says that we should give a sum of money "in keeping with [our] income." That means proportionate: If we earn a lot we will give a lot. If we earn a little we will give less. If our income goes up then our giving should go up. But if, as has happened for many in our country in recent weeks, our income has gone down, then our giving can go down too. Please do not feel guilty or burdened if you need to reduce your giving. God knows your situation and what you can afford. Our salvation and standing with God is not at all dependent on what we give to him, but on the grace has given to us in Jesus. If you need to give less, feel at liberty to do so.*

*At the same time, some people's income will have remained constant, but our expenditure will have been greatly reduced - not travelling so much (reduced petrol/diesel bills)... not going away on holiday... not eating out... not going to the cinema etc. etc. If this is the case, then it could be an act of gratitude to consider giving more for a short time so as to help cover whatever shortfall there may be from others.*

*Finally, something on giving in a planned way. Although many people give through their bank by Standing Order, a number of people at All Saints and at St Michael's still set aside a sum of money at the beginning of the week and put envelopes or loose cash in the collection box/plate each Sunday. Although we can't meet at the moment, may I encourage you to continue to set aside that money each week and then to give it whenever it is that we are allowed to meet together again. Our giving is part of our worship - as we declare how much God is worth to us - so let us not allow this time of lockdown to stop this aspect of our worship. We can still give in a planned and proportionate way. And it can (should) still be sacrificial, generous, willing and cheerful!*

*So, may we be like the Macedonian Christians: "Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity" ( 2 Corinthians 8:1-4).*

*Let's follow him who is the Light of the World in these strange unchartered times.*

*Yours in Jesus, David.*