

In search of...

Truth & Right

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As He May Prosper

Generally, we are very diligent to teach and reteach what the Scriptures have to say regarding worshiping the Lord. You will likely hear dozens if not hundreds of sermons throughout your lifetime regarding singing and now it is what God has authorized, how mechanical instruments violate the silence of the Scriptures, and how we must sing with emotion and understanding. Many times lessons are also taught regarding prayer, its role and importance in our lives, and about just what the Lord's Supper means. Yet one aspect of our worship often does not have much said about it: the collection for the saints.

The command is given in 1 Cor. 16:1-2.

"Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come."

Just doing a quick read through of those two verses, it seems like such a simple command, but it is something that so many cannot seem to follow according to what God has written. Perhaps the most

obvious ways that this passage, and the command to give as a whole, is taken out of context and twisted are when religious groups take up collections multiple times a week, use other methods for raising funds like bake sales or car washes, and use the money for purposes not authorized by the Bible. Is it any wonder that so many in the world have become jaded and suspicious of religious organizations, thinking that they are just trying to make money, instead of having a genuine interest in the lives and souls of those around them?

The idea of someone trying to use the gospel to make money is nothing new; such individuals are described in 1 Tim. 6:3-5.

"If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain."

Sadly, people disregarding God's authority when it comes to giving and the support & work of His Church are not going to go away anytime soon. False teaching has taken hold, and thus will continue to spread; our duty, then, is to boldly teach the truth as much as possible.

Yet as I stated, those are just the most obvious ways that this command is being taken wrongly. There are other ways that we may fall short, ones that we do not see being done on a daily basis by those in the denominational world. First of all, let us refer to 2 Cor. 9:6-7.

"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Again, most of the time, we do not have an issue with teaching and following part of this passage; we stress that in giving, it must be done cheerfully, a free will offering. But as much as we teach about not giving grudgingly, how often is it mentioned about doing so as one has decided in his/her heart? This really gets to the heart of the matter when it comes to how we are to give.

1. As we have prospered, so according to our income and ability
2. As we have purposed in our hearts, decided beforehand

Just those two principles outline what our offering to the collection for the saints is to be. Answer the simple question (and only you can answer it): How much have you prospered? Be careful not to think of this in only terms of a paycheck. How much has God blessed you over the past week? It is according to that which you should be giving. In addition, whatever you choose to give, have you purposed that in your heart?

When & how did you decide what you would be giving? It should be something that you knew and planned before ever stepping a foot into the assembly. Hastily grabbing whatever you might happen to have on you out of your wallet/purse/whatever... does that really seem like purposing to you? If we are honest with ourselves, we recognize that it seems like just the opposite, a last-minute afterthought, not even a decision. Really, this thought goes back to every instance where an offering was made to God; during the age of the Patriarchs and under the Mosaic Law, they gave to the Lord *first*. What was intended for God was set aside, and then they provided for themselves. Do we truly think that He wants any less today? Paul commended the Macedonians for their generosity as such:

"For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." (2 Cor. 7:3-5)

Since we are talking about each person giving of their own accord, as they individually have prospered, no one but you can say whether you are giving as you should. There is no set amount, as the passages we have looked at tell us the concept of tithing, that is, ten percent, found under the Old Law, is not repeated in the New. So while no one else has a right to tell you what you should be giving, God's Word very clearly commands us all how we are to be giving.

One aspect that I have not touched on yet is found in 1 Cor. 16. This giving, the collection taken up for the saints, was and is to be done every first day of the week. When it comes to studying the Scriptures, we harp on the Lord's Supper and how it was

observed on the first day of the week, and thus we, by God's authority, remember Christ's death on every Sunday. It would be plain to us that someone who only partook of the bread and the cup once a month was not following the Bible, yet do we adhere to the same strictness when it comes to the collection? If not, why not? The verse even says, "the first day of **every** week," so why do so many not take that seriously? Trying to rationalize or justify things is something that we human beings do on a regular basis, but understand that the Lord has spoken. Do not try to get around your responsibility to His Church.

Please know that I am not saying all of this in an attempt to increase the collection numbers or to browbeat anyone. This issue is one that sadly is not touched upon nearly as much as other parts of God's Word, yet it is a command for all Christians, and as such deserves our attention and obedience. At its core, giving of our means as we have prospered is about thankfulness; being grateful enough to the Lord to give back a portion, trusting that He will take care of us. The amount does not matter. What matters is that it is given willingly, on each first day of the week, and that we have put thought into what we will give to God.

Once given, that collection is for the saints- to further the cause of the gospel, and care for members of the Lord's Church that have need. Without members giving willingly, cheerfully, how is the Church supposed to function? Each of us is important to this, no matter how much or how little we have. Contribute in giving, in singing, in praying, and in everything by giving God the glory!

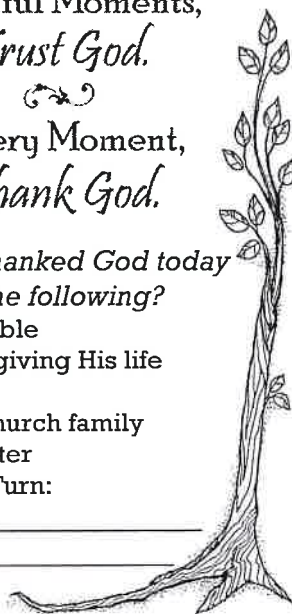
Jarred Currence

Happy Moments,
Praise God.
Difficult Moments,
Seek God.
Quiet Moments,
Worship God.
Painful Moments,
Trust God.

Every Moment,
Thank God.

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- Laughter
- Your Turn:



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BIBLE Trivia!

DIRECTIONS: After searching through your Bible, circle which answer is correct.

1. Who kept Paul in prison, hoping Paul would try to bribe him for release?

- a) Agrippa
- b) Pilate
- c) Felix
- d) Festus

2. Which prophet said, "All we like sheep have gone astray"?

- a) Isaiah
- b) Nathan
- c) Jeremiah
- d) Nahum

3. What king of Moab was noted as a keeper of sheep?

- a) Mizpeh
- b) Eglon
- c) Balak
- d) Mesha

4. In what village did Jesus have His first dinner after His resurrection?

- a) Bethany
- b) Emmaus
- c) Cana
- d) Capernaum

5. Where did Solomon have a dream when he asked for wisdom?

- a) Gibeon
- b) Ramah
- c) Jerusalem
- d) Bethlehem

6. How many times was Peter delivered from prison by an angel?

- a) Three times
- b) Twice
- c) Once
- d) Four times

7. Who had a vision of four angels holding the four winds of the earth?

- a) Peter
- b) Stephen
- c) John
- d) Phillip

8. What leader was told to tear down his father's altar to Baal?

- a) Samson
- b) Josiah
- c) Rehoboam
- d) Gideon

9. Which epistles are addressed to God's people in exile?

- a) 2 Peter and Jude
- b) James and 1 Peter
- c) Jude and Revelation
- d) 1 Peter and 1 John

10. Whose palace had a hand that wrote on the wall?

- a) Jehoshaphat's
- b) Nebuchadnezzar's
- c) Belshazzar's
- d) Darius's

LAST MONTH'S ANSWERS & VERSES:

1) D, Reference: Luke 22:31

2) B, Reference: Job 42:6

3) A, Reference: Exodus 13:21-22

4) C, Reference: 1 Timothy 3:4

5) B, Reference: Exodus 10:21-23

6) C, Reference: Ephesians 4:5

7) A, Reference: 1 Kings 1:50

8) B, Reference: Esther 9:15-16

9) D, Reference: Acts 7:59-60

10) C, Reference: Matthew 17:27