

# What If I Wanted My Church To Be Stronger #3

## Part 3 – Giving

### Introduction: We are in a 'giving season'

- A. As dedicated Bible students we recognize this is not Jesus' birthday.
1. First, the N.T. does not tell us the day of his birth. This is a surprise to many because December 25th has such a long tradition in the western world. In the east January 6th is the very ancient tradition.
  2. Second, the N.T. church and the early church did not celebrate Jesus' birth. They celebrated His resurrection on the first day of the week. Sunday is the church's Holy day (or holiday).
  3. Third, whenever Jesus was born it probably was not in winter. It was cold and rainy in the mountains of Judea from December to February.
  4. It was especially cold at night so the shepherds would not have been in the fields watching their flocks. They brought them to the lower pastures and kept them in sheepfolds —John 10.
- B. Still many are thinking of giving now.
1. We are thinking of giving gifts to family, friends, co-workers and so forth. We give many things during the year, but especially at this season.
  2. For many who believe in God giving to the church is a part of their lives every week. For some it is a lot that they give. For others it is very little. A survey done several years ago showed that the average amount a person gives to the church is just under than 2%. And someone made the comment that some must give a lot to get it that high.
  3. In some parts of the nation a group of 70 or 80 may give less than a hundred dollars. This isn't because most are poor but it is what they believe about giving.
  4. A Korean church I know in Pinellas Park has about 70 or 80 members and they give about \$4000.00 per week. It isn't because they are very rich but it is their attitude towards giving.
  5. Some purpose to give a certain amount even before they are paid. Some wait until Sunday morning when the plate is passed and decide what to give based on what is in their pocket.
- C. We need to give liberally to the Lord's work.
1. We have been talking about ways we can make our local church stronger. We need to be concerned about the *Clearwater church of the Lord* being strong both **physically** and **spiritually**.
  2. We have talked about making ourselves stronger by **studying** and developing as **teachers** and **helping** one another.
  3. We have talked about making others stronger by **encouraging** each another, **praying** for one another and **attending** all the services of our local church that we can.
- D. We will consider today the need to **give**.

### 1. We give to the Lord's work

- A. When many think of giving they often think of money.
1. Many just view the collection as a way to collect money to pay the bills. The collection is sometimes looked on as the least spiritual part of our worship service.
  2. Certainly there are bills to pay if we do not want to meet in a park and hope for good weather. If we want to use song-books to help us sing and have other conveniences we must be able to pay for these.
  3. While having a building and a full time preacher are not necessary, they should be an advantage. These do take money.

- B. Some churches make the collection one of the more emphasized parts of their service.
1. TV evangelists are always asking for money. They make a big deal out of giving and tie it to being blessed and saved by God.
  2. While there is some truth in this, some churches do so much asking for money that we sometimes avoid it so folks do not think this is what we are about.
  3. That isn't true of all churches of Christ. Some regularly ask for more money from the members. I read in a bulletin several years ago where the elders of a church had decided on some big project and said they needed more money from the members.
  4. The preacher was writing an article in the bulletin where he said he didn't want to have to tell them again how to get money to give for the project. Just several years earlier he had told them what to do when they had another big project planned.
  5. He said he didn't want to tell them again to get a second mortgage on their home, to borrow on their 401k and so forth. They needed to remember these things and do them on their own.
- C. The weekly collection on the first day of the week is not just a physical act.
1. It is physical but it has a spiritual meaning and purpose. There are many good reasons why we give. It is not just to pay bills —although again, these are necessary.
  2. *1 Cor 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.*
  3. *1 Cor 4:17 For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.*
  4. Notice that they were collecting for the poor saints in Judea —see also 2 Cor 8 & 9. They weren't just collecting to pay bills but to help needy brethren. We have done this often over the years, not just here but in other places.
  5. Notice also that this was not just a command for Corinth. Paul taught the churches in Galatia the same thing. Many try to say this Sunday collection was something unique for them. However it is for every church to support the work God has told them to do.
  6. *2 Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work,*
  7. Every good work that God commands us to do is to be supported in the same way. It is to be done by a **free-will** offering on the first day of the week. Each member is to give as God has prospered them.
- D. There are several reasons for the collection on the first day of the week.
1. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9 that if they gave liberally and from the heart that God would make them abound to every good work. The collection is for the good work that God gave the church and Christians to do.
  2. *2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work,*
  3. Helping poor saints (benevolence) is just one work of the church. We have many examples of this.
  4. *Acts 6:1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.*
  5. *1 Tim 5:9-10 Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, 10 well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work,*
  6. *2 Thess 3:10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.*
  7. We see that the early church helped other churches and their own. We see two more things here.
    - a. They had rules. They did not just help any member who wanted help. We see two examples where churches were told to limit their benevolence.
    - b. They never helped the world at large. They were not a general benevolent society. Their responsibility to each other was as a family. Their responsibility to the world was to preach the Gospel to them.
- E. They also supported preaching, evangelism and edification of the brethren.
1. The primarily work of the early church was preaching. They carried the gospel to the world in one generation. The churches supported this work. Paul and others were regularly supported by the brethren.

2. *2 Cor 11:8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you.*
3. *Phil 4:16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.*
4. They also supported the work of the local church in preaching and edification. Whatever God commands the church to do can be supported by the collection.
5. *Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*
6. There are many examples of the early church assembling and meeting regularly in different places. However a church chooses to meet and teach and preach and encourage it has the right to support this by the collection.
7. *1 Cor 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.*
8. In this passage Paul is discussing miraculous gifts. While we do not do these things miraculously today, we still have a song leader with songs and teachers with lessons and preachers with sermons and men to pray, etc. All we do is designed to edify the church here.

F. We see then that the collection is an important part of our worship and work.

## 11. Principles for giving

- A. We recognize that we need to give. The question then is, ‘**How much?**’
  1. We saw in the introduction that there is a great difference of opinion about this. Most give little or next to it. A few give a lot. I think members of the body of Christ give more than most —though a few give much more than us.
  2. We recognize that the N.T. does not command us to give a specific amount. It is left up to us to decide. However there are principles that we need to consider.
- B. Israel in the O.T. tithed.
  1. The word ‘**tithe**’ means *tenth*. The Jews were required yearly to give several tenths of all they had. Many think they only gave **one** tenth but they gave more.
  2. *Lev 27:30-33 'And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the LORD. 31 If a man wants at all to redeem any of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. 32 And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD. 33 He shall not inquire whether it is good or bad, nor shall he exchange it; and if he exchanges it at all, then both it and the one exchanged for it shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.'*
  3. The O.T. mentions several other tithes. The priests were to be supported by the tithes. Every third year the poor were to be helped by them. Many think these were two separate tithes, besides the regular tithe. Besides this there were the regular sacrifices for the different feasts days and so forth.
  4. *Deut 12:5-6 'But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. 6 There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.'*
  5. *Deut 14:28-29 'At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. 29 And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.'*
  6. By the N.T. period many of the Jews were giving nearly a **third** of their goods and money to the priests and temple and so forth. There was also the temple tax.
  7. *Matt 17:24 'When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, 'Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?''*
  8. *Luke 11:42 'But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.'*
  9. We see that the Jews gave far more than 10%. However few Christians give even this much out of their prosperity.

## C. Tithing actually predated the law of Moses.

1. Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils of his victory over the kings of the east. This was about 500 years before the law of Moses.
2. *Heb 7:1-2 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace,"*
3. When Jacob was going to Haran to look for a wife and escape his brother Esau's wrath he promised to give God a tenth if He brought him back safely.
4. *Gen 28:22 "And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."*
5. So while Moses gave specific times and regulations and requirements for tithing, it was already the custom for God's people.

D. Lets consider some **principles** for giving.

1. We have already seen from 1 Corinthians 16:2 that we give as we've been **prospered**. Jehovah does not judge by how much we give but we should give as we have been blessed. That is why Jesus said the poor widow gave so much more than all the rich folks.
2. *Luke 21:2-3 And He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all;"*
3. We are also to give **liberally**. This means we give **generously**. God gave us the great gift of His only begotten Son. We need to be as generous. We have so much more than the Jews did, we should give with gratefulness.
4. *Rom 12:8 ...he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*
5. *2 Cor 9:6-7 But thus I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*
6. We are to give 1) **bountifully** (generously), 2) **purposely** (purposed in our hearts) and 3) **cheerfully** (happily). Giving should come from the heart and we should be glad to give back to the work of the Lord some of what He has blessed us with.
7. We see that we are not required to give a tenth or two tenths or more. We decide what we give according to 1) the **need**, 2) our **prosperity** and 3) our love and **appreciation for the Lord**.

E. There are  **blessings** in giving properly.

1. We have already seen that some of our prosperity is tied to our giving. If we give bountifully to the work of the Lord He will bless us that we may give more.
2. *2 Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work,*
3. God will reward us if our hearts are right. God does not judge by the amount we give itself. We have seen this with the poor widow. If we give with the right attitude God will watch over us.
4. *Matt 6:3-4 "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."*
5. Giving bountifully and then being blessed by God are not automatic. This is not some super method for getting rich.
6. This is where many TV evangelists and denominations go too far. They teach a '**gospel of health and wealth**.' The Bible does not teach this. This is not a **get rich quick** (or even slowly) scheme.
7. *2 Cor 8:12 For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.*
8. We must have a willing mind. Willing minds give according to a) their ability and b) the need. They are willing to give and give cheerfully. They plan to always give generously but sometimes they give more.
9. *2 Cor 8:3-5 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.*

10. These are the ones the Lord blesses. They may not be rich but they usually have what they need. They are blessed because they put first things first and seek to do the most they can instead of the least.
11. *Matt 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*

F. We see then that we need to give generously.

## **Conclusion: We need to give generously to the Lord's work.**

- A. In this season of giving, we must remember we always owe God more than we could ever give.
- B. God has given us His Son. We can have salvation in heaven if we accept this offer.
  1. We must believe in Christ, repent and turn from our sins. Then we must be baptized to have our sins washed away and be saved. We then serve the Lord and become stronger.
  2. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
  3. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
- C. If we can help anyone accept the salvation the Lord offers today, please let us.