

Does Giving Matter?
1 Cor 16:1-4

Wayne Rice tells about the time Mrs. Baughman, his junior high Sunday school teacher, brought a pan of brownies to class with her: "While the brownies sat tantalizingly over by her chair, she gave each student a slip of paper labeled with an expense: house payment, light bill, groceries, entertainment, and so on. My slip had 'car payment' written on it.

"Then Mrs. Baughman picked up her tray of brownies and began naming the expenses she had written on the slips of paper. One by one we redeemed our slips of paper for a brownie. 'Car payment!' she announced, and I jumped up to get my share of the goodies as she lifted a fresh brownie from the pan.

"The last brownie disappeared, although my friend Donald still held his unredeemed slip. 'God!' called out Mrs. Baughman. And Donald, whose paper had 'God' written on it, came forward, hoping that his teacher had one more brownie hidden somewhere. With the knife, Mrs. Baughman scaped the crumbs from the bottom of the pan into Donald's napkin. My friend got a pretty raw deal, I thought--just crumbs.

"The brownies in the pan represent your money,' explained Mrs. Baughman. 'If you don't give God His share right away,' she said, 'He probably won't get anything at all, except maybe the crumbs.'

"I've never forgotten that object lesson," says Wayne. "The day my friend got only brownie crumbs, I learned that God has first rights to everything I have. Sure, I continue to struggle with materialism, and I still have trouble setting priorities, but I'm thankful that somebody took time to teach me a little bit about stewardship while I was still young."

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PRAYER

I. Giving Addressed

A. O.T. Giving

1. As you read the Old Testament, you see that tithing was very central to their religious life.
2. Tithing was considered at 10% of your first fruits
3. It was commanded by God to give to God as an act of worship.
4. He even made Judea suffer when they failed to give to God as he had commanded.

B. N.T. Giving

1. Giving in the New Testament seems to be very different
2. We don't see the commandment for giving in context of worship.
3. However, having said that, verses like our text and several others indicated an expectation of giving as the saints had need.
4. And, in essence taking care of our brothers and sisters is part of our worship to God.
5. 2nd Corinthians teaches us to give with a cheerful heart. Give us ourselves first, and to plan what we will give.
6. The money was used for the poor of the church, for missionary purposes (Acts 11:29; Romans 15:25–27;)
7. the support of the ministry (1 Corinthians 9:4–14; Galatians 6:6),

C. Our Text

1. Something we see in Paul's 3rd missionary journey was an emphasis on raising money for the poor of the church.
2. As we read letters to those churches and read in Acts, he held this project as very important to the overall health of the church.
3. He emphasized here and in Acts 20 to have the money ready on Sundays so when he arrived, all would be there and not have to go through a last minute guilt trip to get more money together from that congregation.

4. We have so many ways to give today that getting the money here on Sunday isn't the same concern as it was back then.

5. But, giving to the needs of the church is still as important as ever.

II. Giving and Us

A. How much should we give?

1. A man once knelt with his pastor and committed himself to God to give a certain percent of his income as long as he lived. From his first week's pay he gave \$1 to the Lord. Soon his weekly offering had increased to \$10. As time went on, he continued to prosper. Before long he was giving \$100 a week, then \$200, and in time, \$500 a week. Finally, he called the pastor. "Please come and see me," he said. "It's urgent!" When the minister arrived, the host said, "You remember that promise I made to God years ago? How can I get released? When I made the promise, I only had to give a dollar, but now it's \$500. I can't afford to give away money like that." The wise old pastor looked at his friend and said, "I'm afraid you cannot get a release from the

promise, but there is something we can do. We can kneel down and ask God to shrink your income so that you can afford to give a dollar again."

2. A while back, Rhyann asked if the Bible commands 10% of our gross or our net.
3. The O.T. teaching was a tithe of their gross. In fact, when all was said and done, close to 25% of their gross assets were given back to God.
4. By doing that, God also blessed them in always having enough.
 - a) He wanted the gentile nations to see Israel's dependence in God and his blessing them.
 - b) They didn't work on the Sabbath and gave an unbelievable amount to God, but always seem to be blessed when not going against God's will.
5. Some today argue that is exactly what we should do today.
6. Others argue that we should give as we have been prospered and that should be decided on an individual basis.
7. Still others argue we only need to give if there are needy saints in the church.
8. How much should we give has always been a heart matter in the Christian era.
 - a) Some give very little like the widow's mite, but it means everything to them.
 - b) Some give abundantly because God has blessed them abundantly and they want to use that money to do his will.
 - c) Others give but resent every dollar they put in the plate.
 - d) Still others give only a little because everything else comes before God as we saw in the beginning of this lesson.
9. Matthew 6:24 (ESV) — 24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.
10. What is most important in your heart?

B. Why We Should Give

1. God is concerned more with your motive for giving or not giving than he is with the amount.

2. In the matter of giving, some Christians are like Farmer Applegate's cow. A summer boarder once asked, "How much milk does that critter give?" The poorly educated dairyman replied with his usual drawl, "Wal, ef ye mean by voluntary

contribution, she don't give none. But ef ye kin git her cornered so's she can't kick none, an able-bodied man kin take away 'leven quarts a day!"

3. Apparently, some believers enjoy their salvation so little that they too have to be forced to contribute to any church-related cause.
4. We have by example of the New Testament Christians giving for several purposes as we mentioned earlier.
5. All of those things are still going on and need to be supported by the members of the church today.
6. As long as there are brothers and sisters in need, as long as the work of the church needs to be done, we should be giving as we have been prospered.

C. No Joking Matter

1. There are so many jokes about Christians and their reluctance to give that it is sad.
2. For that many jokes to exist, there has to be truth behind the jokes.
3. What could we do here in Rochester if we gave with a heart that wanted to bless others as we have been blessed by God?
4. What would happen if we changed that dollar we drop into the plate to an amount that really showed how we have been prospered?

III. Concluding thoughts

A. As Paul finishes his letter, he sums up his thoughts and send greetings to and from several individuals.

1. In the middle of those greeting is a great couple of verses
2. 1 Corinthians 16:13–14 (NLT) — 13 Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. 14 And do everything with love.
3. As we finish this series, I can't think of a better way to remind you of how to live as Christians.

B. Be on Guard

1. Don't let sin slip into your life and the life of the church.
2. It's easy to get complacent in our faith and that when Satan strikes.

3. In my reading this week, I was reading about Jesus being tempted in the wilderness. When Satan couldn't defeat him the Luke passage says he went away until the next opportunity came.

4. If Satan was always looking to trip up Jesus, the son of God; Do you really think he won't make the same attempts on you?

C. Stand firm in the faith

1. we often stand firm for a lot of things that don't matter, make sure we stand firm in the faith.

2. God has given us his teachings in the Bibles we hold in our hands.

3. Study them, learn them, live them.

D. Be courageous and strong

1. live your faith with boldness and power of the resurrection we talked about last week.

2. We aren't called to be militant in our faith.

3. Jesus didn't say go into all the world and conquer nations in my name; he said go into all the world TEACHING in my name.

4. That mean we need to be willing to share our faith despite opposition.

5. It doesn't mean force our faith on others.

6. God will work on the receptive hearts if we plant the seeds of the gospel.

E. Do everything in love

1. that's the key to it all; Love.

2. Love for God.

3. Love for your brothers and sisters.

4. Love for the lost around you.