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# **WORSHIP THE FIRST-CENTURY WAY**

One of a Two-Book Series

**WANDERING SOUL,  
ENTITLED HEART, AND  
THE SIDE-TRACKED CHURCH**

**By Katheryn Maddox Haddad**

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# **DEDICATION**

**Dedicated to all people everywhere who want to  
go FORWARD – BACK  
to the Bible.**

**If we all did that, we would once again have  
Christianity unity.**

## 6 UNEXPLOITED GIVERS

*For all that is in the world  
~ the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride  
of life ~  
is not of the Father but is of the world.  
I John 2:16 (NKJV)*

### Famous Theologians

**About 450, AUGUSTINE - PRE-CATHOLIC:** Give without a qualm: it's the Lord who receives, the Lord who is asking. You wouldn't have anything to give him unless you had first received it from him....acts of charity. (*Sermon 390*)

**About 1836, JOHN CALVIN - REFORMED CHURCHES:** "Wherefore the Papal priests draw a silly inference when they claim the tithes for themselves, as if due to them in right of the priesthood; else must they needs prove that those whom they call the laity are their tenants...it would be sacrilege to appropriate the tithes to their own use....'The priesthood being changed, the right also is at the same time transferred' (Hebrews 7:12)...whatever the Law had conferred on the Levitical priests now belongs to Christ

alone." (*Commentaries on the Last Four Books of Moses, Numbers 18:20*)

**1682, JOHN BUNYAN - BAPTIST:** "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him....The work now to be done was...to bestow their charity upon the poor; yea, to provide for time to come." (*The Works of John Bunyan, "The Seventh-Day Sabbath" Vol. II, pg. 377*)

**1721, MATTHEW HENRY - PRESBYTERIAN:** "Markets in the temple...rob God of his honor....The priests lived, and lived plentifully upon the altar; but, not content with that, they found other ways and means to squeeze money out of the people." (*Commentary, Vol. 5, Matthew 21:12*)

**1868, CHARLES H. SPURGEON - BAPTIST:** "Much has been said about giving the tenth of one's income to the Lord....But it is as great mistake to suppose that the Jew only gave a tenth. He gave very, very, very much more than that...but after that came all the free-will offerings...so that, perhaps, he gave a third....I do not, however, like to lay down any rules....for the Lord's New Testament...teacheth us rather the soul of liberality....Give...proportionately, as the Lord has prospered you....You are not under the Law but under grace; you are not, therefore, to give or to do anything to God as of compulsion, as though you heard the old Mosaic whip cracking in your ears."

*Oh, Jesus, how hard it must have been for your apostles to say goodbye to you. But you assured them you'd always be partners with them. Your promise is true today also. You are as close to us as our heart. We feel you smiling somehow. Where are you, Jesus? You're inside of us. That's why we cannot see you. Thank you for your friendship.*

A disaster happened one Sunday morning in church when my twin brother and I were maybe a year old. It was during the collection. And, by the way, our World War II era church building only had a basement at the time due to building-supply shortages, and so had a cement floor.

You understand that men do not have laps. Women have laps - at least whenever they wear skirts. Women back then always wore skirts. Well, I was sitting on my mother's lap, and my twin brother was sitting on my father's non-lap.

The collection plate slowly made its way down the rows back and forth, back and forth between the ushers in each aisle. When it got to our row in the back, either my father got his hands mixed up, or forgot he had my brother on his non-lap.

Letting go of my brother, he reached up and took the collection plate from the usher. Then it happened.

My brother commenced to slip through my father's legs and fall upside down onto the cement floor. Immediately the collection plate commenced to slip through my father's hands and fall upside down onto the cement floor.

The collection plate clanged all over the floor, and my brother screamed all over the floor. Immediately both my father and the usher got down on the floor with the

others and began trying to retrieve their charges. Finally, the usher was able to grab the collection plate and my father was able to grab his baby. The usher resumed his place in the aisle, and my father resumed his place in the pew. The money eventually quit rolling and chinking across the floor, and my brother eventually quit screaming.

By this time, half the congregation was embarrassed and trying to wish the whole thing out of existence. The other half of the congregation was snickering or outright laughing. My father wished he could just fall through the floor, and my mother wished he would.

Isn't giving like this today? We feel like we're letting go of the important things in life to take hold of the collection plate and put something in it. We feel embarrassed at some times, and we're made to feel guilty at other times. As a result, any sermon on giving is considered too much.

The way giving is approached, we can certainly see why. Sometimes we are made to feel like the man who announced the collection plate would now be passed with the warning, "And now brethren, let us give in accordance with what we reported on our Form 1040."

*Oh Jesus, you went through so much for me. How could you? You dreaded it. The Father said it was the only way. You did it for him. For me. For love. How can I ever pay you for eternity with you, paid for with your agony and tears, your flesh and your blood?*

## **Viewpoint of Outsiders**



George Gallup wrote in *The People's Religion: American Faith in the '90s*, page 144, that the number-one reason given by people for having abandoned the church was "too much concern [1] for money." [2]

George Barna, another pollster, found the same thing and wrote of it in his *Never on a Sunday: The Challenge of the Unchurched*. [3] In both cases, half of the dropouts gave this as their primary reason for leaving the church.

A large portion of religious radio or TV programs, either before, during, or after, make at least one appeal for money "or else this ministry cannot go on." It is as though the public is required to support this man, when it was this man's idea to go on the air, not the public's.

Everyone is acquainted with the money scams of some media evangelists, bilking believers out of thousands of dollars, sometimes life savings. In fact, the book *The Day America Told the Truth* lists TV evangelists as 69th out of 71 professions Americans thought were dishonest. They were beaten out even by prostitutes. [4]

In his book, *Inside the Minds of Unchurched Harry and Mary*, Lee Strobel, a former atheist, said, "When I first went to church, I suspected that the ministry's real goal was to fleece me. Actually, I was secretly hoping I would find the church was a scam because not only would I have a front-page story for *The Chicago Tribune*, but I could reject the church and its God along with it." [5]

Several years ago, *Time* magazine interviewed a well-known minister. The reporter's pre-listed questions centered on his salary, his vacations, his cars, his houses, whether he owned an airplane or boat, and what his benefit package was.

Jesus never asked for money. Never. Never, ever! Even though he traveled all over the "holy land" preaching during a period of three years, he never asked for money. He could have worked miracles to get money, but never did. Well he did one time in order to pay Peter's and his annual temple tax, which Peter got out of a fish's mouth (Matthew 17:24-27). We have no indication he continued to work at his trade once he began his ministry. There were people who voluntarily supported him (Luke 8:1-3), but he never asked for their money. [6]

How could that be?

But, before we get into what the church leadership has a right to expect of people and possible approaches, let us look at what the church does not have a right to.

*God, I'd never drop out of church because of money. No matter how much they asked for, I wouldn't drop out. Well, I may go to another church, but I'd never drop out for good.*

## Old Testament Giving

### TITHING WASN'T ALL

Tithing, that is, giving one-tenth of one's income, is mentioned only twelve times in the Old Testament. It is mentioned four times in the New Testament, and always in reference to Old Testament tithing. It is never mentioned in connection with Christianity.

The first mention is of Abraham who lived before the Law of Moses, but voluntarily gave one-tenth of

everything to the priest of Salem (Genesis 14:20 and Hebrews 7:5-9).

According to the Law of Moses, the Jews had to tithe every crop and every animal (Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 14:22-28). These tithes were used by the Levite tribe to live on, and the Levites in turn were to give a tenth of what they'd received for the priests to live on (Numbers 18:24-28). In Jesus day, but still during the Law of Moses, Jews tithed even spice seeds, and then bragged about how holy they were (Matthew 23:23, Luke 11:42; 18:11-14).

Only Levites and priests were allowed to collect the tithes, and they did this by going around to all the towns (Nehemiah 10:37-38). When people failed to pay their tithes, God said they were robbing him (Malachi 3:8-10).

But it didn't stop there. Over and above their tithes, Jews were required to give the first fruits of their crops, firstborn of their herds, and other gifts (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 31:5-12).

But still the good Jew did not stop giving. Deuteronomy 12:6 refers to "your [1] tithes, [2] and special gifts, [3] what you have vowed to give, [4] and your free will offerings, [5] and the firstborn of your herds and flocks." Some people even got so they bragged about their freewill offerings which were over and above their tithing (Amos 4:4)!

Storerooms were set up in every town to store the special contributions, first fruits, and tithes (Nehemiah 12:44; 13:5).

Furthermore, every third year, all Jews were to set up a welfare program with an additional tithe for the Levites, aliens, fatherless, and widows in times of emergency. So, once every three years, Jews were to give 20% of their income.

## **PAYMENT FOR PRAYER REQUESTS**

Special prayer requests involved what the Jews referred to as vows. They paid in "temple shekels" which, in today's buying power, is about \$5. Examples of vows/prayer requests were....

for traveling mercies (Genesis 28:20)  
 to dedicate oneself or someone else for special service to God (Leviticus 27:2)  
 to dedicate oneself as a Nazarite (Numbers 6:2-18)  
 to be delivered from an enemy army (Numbers 21:2)  
 to have victory over an enemy army (Judges 11:30, 39)  
 to have a child (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 1:11; Proverbs 31:2)  
 to return to one's home and be reconciled with family (2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 15:7-8)  
 to be freed of troubles and desertion by friends (Psalm 22:11, 25; 66:13)  
 to thank God if prayer is answered (Psalm 50:14, 56:12; 65:1)  
 to prove allegiance to God before others (Psalm 76:11; Isaiah 19:21)  
 to thank God for a verdict of not guilty (Psalm 116:8, 14, 18-19)  
 to find the perfect place to build (Psalm 132:1-5)  
 to recover from illness (Job 22:27; Jonah 2:7-9)  
 to express fear of and acknowledge God's justice (Jonah 1:16)  
 to express peace (Nahum 1:15).

David, by the way, made vows every day (Psalm 61:8). These prayer requests were not free. Leviticus 27:2-7 lists the following money that had to be paid for vows/prayer requests:

AGE SPAN & GENDER	HEBREW MONEY	AMERICAN DOLLAR EQUIVALENT
Male 20-60	50 shekels	\$250
Female 20-60	30 shekels	\$150
Male 5-20	20 shekels	\$100
Female 5-20	10 shekels	\$50
Male birth-5	5 shekels	\$25
Female birth-5	3 shekels	\$15
Male 60+	15 shekels	\$75
Female 60+	10 shekels	\$50

## NIMAL/FOOD OFFERINGS

Leviticus 5:15 refers to "...a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel." One shekel of silver was worth about \$25 dollars in today's values. Therefore, let us give a minimum value to every animal of \$25. Below is a list of potential offerings:

**\$25 FIRST BORN (Leviticus 3:45-47).** Whenever an animal or person bore their first born, that child or animal had to be given to God's service. However, they could be redeemed or bought back for five shekels each.

**\$25 BURNED OFFERINGS** (Leviticus 1:6, 8-13; 8:18-21; 16:24) could be a bull, ram, or male bird. It was voluntary for (1) atonement for unintentional sin in general, (2) expression of devotion, or (3) commitment and complete surrender to God's will.

**\$5 GRAIN OFFERINGS** (Leviticus 2; 6:14-23) were grain, flour, oil, incense, bread, and salt. They were sometimes burned up with a burnt offering, and sometimes eaten with fellowship offerings. It was voluntary for (1) recognition of God's goodness and provisions, (2) devotion to God.

**\$10 FELLOWSHIP OFFERINGS** (Leviticus 3; 7:11-34) could be any clean animal or a variety of breads. It was voluntary for (1) thanksgiving.

**\$20 SIN OFFERINGS** (Leviticus 4:1 - 5:13; 6:24-30; 8:14-17; 16:3-22) had to be a goat or lamb, or perhaps a bird if poor, or of flour if extremely poor. It was mandatory for (1) atonement for specific unintentional sin, (2) confession of sin, (3) forgiveness of sin, (4) cleansing from defilement.

**? GUILT OFFERINGS** (Leviticus 5:14 - 6:7; 7:1-6) had to be a ram or lamb, but were not offered very often. It was mandatory for unintentional sin requiring full restitution (such as killing someone else's animal) plus 20%. It was mandatory for cleansing from defilement.

## **JEWISH ANNUAL GIVING BUDGET**

Let us make out a sample annual giving budget for a good male Jew.

KIND OF OFFERING	COST OF EACH	PERIOD OF TIME	TOTAL FOR YEAR	GRAND TOTAL FOR YR
Making one vow	\$250	Each Month	\$3,000	
Sacrificing 20 firstborns in herd	\$25	Each Spring	\$500	
Asking forgiveness for one unknown, unintentional sin	\$25	Each Week	\$1,300	
Reaffirming dedication to God	\$5	Each Week	\$250	
Giving thanks to God for his goodness	\$10	Each Week	\$520	
Asking forgiveness for one known, unintentional sin	\$20	Each Week	\$1,040	
TOTAL FOR MIDDLE-INCOME JEW				\$6,610
PLUS TITHING OF AVERAGE INCOME OF \$30,000*				\$3,000
YEARLY TOTAL GIVING FOR AVERAGE GOOD JEW			<b>32%</b>	<b>\$9,610</b>

So, we see that an average middle-income good Jew gave one-third of his income to God, not one-tenth. Plus, every third year, he was required to give an additional tenth (\$3,000 in our example or \$250/month) for the welfare program (Deuteronomy 26:12), which would take his total contribution to \$1025 per month or \$12,610. That's 42% of their annual income each third year!

Are we sure we want to get involved in the Jewish rules for giving? Anyone who tries to get people to tithe is being inconsistent.

First of all, tithing was part of the Law of Moses, and only represented one-third of what the average good Jew was expected to give. Yes, Abraham gave one tenth, but he did it out of faith, not requirement. God never commanded him to do this.

Second, if people insist on tithing anyway, to be consistent, they must also offer animal sacrifices, which is part of the same law, go to the temple three times a year, etc. Actually, there are approximately 600 laws involved in the Law of Moses. People insisting on keeping the old law must keep it all. If they fail to obey any part of it, they are guilty of breaking the entire law (James 2:10).

Third, the Law of Moses was nailed to Jesus' cross, thus nullifying it in the Christian era (Colossians 2:14 and Hebrews 8:6, 13).

*I thought I knew all about tithing, God, but now I see that was just the tip of the iceberg. Do our leaders know all this? This is really strange. I never heard of it before.*

## **New Testament Giving**

There are only five passages in the entire New Testament on giving. Does this mean it is not important? No. It only takes God saying something one time to make it so.

However, it seems that some church leaders have so much to say about tithing and other variations of "giving," that they're indirectly chiding God for omitting so much discussion about it. However, God had it all figured out. It is man who has complicated it.



The first mention of giving is in Acts 4:32-35, right after the church began. It is a beautiful example of giving just because they wanted to, not because there was a thermometer on the wall, finance committee meetings, a campaign, pre-assigned envelopes, or even a church-owned business. Let's just quote it:

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had....There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need."

Did all the early Christians sell all their real estate and donate the money to the church? No. It says that "from time to time" someone would sell something so the money could be used by other Christians who were in need.

Did the church go into a selling business? No. The individuals did the selling themselves and then brought the money to the church for distribution. Notice, they sold their possessions. That means valuables, or cookies, or whatever they had, individual Christians sold on their own.

In the account that follows, one couple brought money to the church, but lied about the amount by saying this was 100% of the sale price when it was not really. The amount was not as important as the lie.

Peter replied, "Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?" Did Peter ever say the church owned anything? No. Did he say the church sold anything or received any of the money directly from the purchaser(s)? No. The church was not involved until after the selling transaction took place.

So, in the same way, if we are good at selling a particular commodity, we should sell it on our own in private, and consider the money from it as ours. Then we can take it to the church. We could tell others in our congregation about it to give them a chance to purchase, but we should follow their example and sell whatever we have as a private transaction.

Did it ever cross the minds of the early Christians for the church to go into a business? Probably. After all, selling things in the temple lobby and providing services (currency exchange and animals to sacrifice) in the temple lobby were accepted practices. But did the apostles allow it? Never. In fact, Jesus angrily condemned it.

Surely they understood just how effective free-will giving is. In Exodus 35:4-9, Moses asked the people if they would voluntarily donate whatever was necessary to build the tabernacle and the golden furniture in it. Did they grumble? No way. Exodus 36:2-7 says the people kept giving and giving and giving.

Someone went to Moses and complained, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done." As a result, "the people were restrained from bringing more" (Exodus 36:6).

*God, for some reason this makes sense. People shouldn't be squeezing the money out of us. But does it work? It sounds like it could. I hope it does.*

## Free-Will Offerings

Paul is the only apostle to write down instructions

about giving. Ninety percent was to the church in Corinth, the church he had so many problems with, and which required at least two letters to try to straighten them out. Because they were lazy? No. It was because their zeal was clouding what God wanted them to do.

He covered this same issue regarding the Jews when he said in Romans 10:2 and 17 "they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge." Their zeal had to be based on something besides the emotions or man's logic, for "faith comes from...the word."

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:13-14 Paul referred to the Jewish practice of feeding the priests and Levites from the sacrifices the people offered, which was allowed for in the Law of Moses. He said that practice could continue so as to provide support for various ministers of the church.

Reading Exodus through Deuteronomy in the Old Testament shows the large variety of work the Levites did around the temple, especially since no one else was allowed in the building itself. Therefore, today we can support any minister who preaches, evangelizes, oversees (elder), does secretary work, does janitor work, or whatever their ministry.

Notice, he did not include the practice of selling, although he had personally witnessed it upon many occasions on the temple property, having been raised and educated in Jerusalem. What he did allow was for the offerings of the worshippers be used to support the priests and Levites serving in the temple. That is all.

We do know that Paul did not accept the church's money except in dire emergency. Instead he sold tents (Acts 18:3). Did he take them to the church building to sell? No, he did it on his own.

Later in the book he told the Corinthians to take up a collection every Sunday of each member "in keeping with his income" and save it so that when he arrived,

they'd be ready with their collective donation for the poor. Notice, the church was not to collect money any other day of the week. If we'd just keep this one rule, it would sure go a long way into convincing people "all the church wants is your money."

Much later, Paul wrote Timothy in Ephesus and told the church that any widow age sixty or above left alone with no family, and who dedicates herself to good works, should be supported by the church. However, he warned that if a widow has family - children or grandchildren - they are to support her or be considered worse than unbelievers. (See 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:3-10.)

Thus far we have seen that the money can go to support people with various ministries in the church, and it can go to support Christian widows with no family. What else was their money used for?

*God, I've always wondered whether being paid makes preachers like mercenaries. I guess not. You are wiser than I and you said it is okay. Thanks for the explanation.*

## **Benevolent Program**

Paul got involved in a large benevolent program for the Christians in Jerusalem, Judea. Why?

Most of the Christians at that time were in Judea. Christians there and everywhere were losing their jobs, their property was being taken from them, and breadwinners were being imprisoned (Hebrews 10:32-34). They were doing the best they could, selling their possessions and lands to help out (Acts 4:32-37), but eventually that ran out. They needed outside help. On

Paul's second missionary trip, he told the Christians in Corinth, southern Greece, about the poor Christians in Judea. They became the instigators of a campaign to send relief money to them (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:10.) It would take time to collect all the money, so Paul went ahead and left without their donation.

He returned to Judea where he saw the poverty for himself. So, on Paul's third missionary trip, he went through the provinces of Galatia and Asia in today's Turkey, telling people about the needs of the poor Christians in Jerusalem and Judea (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:1).

He told the church in Ephesus also (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:1). While in Ephesus, he wrote the church in Corinth in southern Greece that he was going to visit them. Toward the end of his letter he said,

"Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatians [Turkish] 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" (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:1-2).

He further provided for fiscal responsibility with his next statements: "Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me [to Jerusalem]" (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:3-4).

Next he went back to Northern Greece, called Macedonia, where he returned to the city of Philippi (Acts 19:21 - 20:2). There, he told them about the financial problems of the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea. He also bragged to them about the congregation in Corinth, Greece, just south of them, saying they'd decided to send a sizeable contribution to Judea (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:1-2).

The Philippians were fairly poor Christians themselves. Yet, "out of the most severe trial, their

overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity...they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:2, 4).

Just before Paul went to Corinth down in Achaia, the southern province of Greece, he wrote to them a second letter telling them he was not commanding them to give (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:8), but since they had decided the previous year to make a donation, "now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:11).

He went on to say that they should give "according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:13).

Once more Paul was fiscally responsible with the donation of the Christians. He sent this letter to the Corinthians by Titus and "we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering....We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:18-20).

He concluded his discussion of the benevolent campaign requests to various congregations by telling them to "finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised [a year earlier]. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given....Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:7).

Paul went on to Corinth in southern Greece (Achaia) and stayed three months (Acts 20:3). While

there, he wrote the church in Rome that he wanted to go there soon to impart spiritual gifts to them (Romans 1:11). Near the end of his letter, he asked the Christians to pray for the benevolence campaign with this explanation.

"Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia [northern Greece] and Achaia [southern Greece] were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem" (Romans 15:25-27). Paul further asked the Christians in Rome to pray that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem will accept such a gift from Gentile Christians (Romans 15:31).

Some of those who accompanied him later on the way back to Jerusalem were three Christians from the province of Asia where Ephesus is and one from the province of Galatia (Acts 20:4), both in Turkey.

Soon thereafter, Paul arrived in Jerusalem "to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings" (Acts 24:17).

God, I always thought benevolence was pretty straight forward. If someone knocks on the church door, give him some food. I never thought of coordinating with other churches like this. And they all trusted Paul with their money. They knew he loved you.

## **Fund Raisers**

But, if we are on a tight budget, where are we going to get the money to give others?

In some denominations, it is standard to hold bazaars in the church basement or out in the parking lot at least once a year and advertise it to the general public.

Did the Jews sell things on temple grounds? Yes, they did. They sold animals to people who had traveled such long distances to offer sacrifices, it was more practical to purchase the equivalent of what they would have brought with them. Or they were made available to people who did not own any herds of their own. In fact, the priests arranged for merchants to set up their booths in the temple courtyard where the women and Gentiles were allowed to worship.

Further, since the temple only dealt with temple currency - the temple shekel - people exchanged their Roman currency and currency from other parts of the world for temple currency right there on temple grounds.

But Jesus strenuously objected to this practice once at the beginning of his ministry and once near the end. They were buying and selling on temple grounds. All through Leviticus, the book explaining temple worship in detail, it says that offerings were to be BROUGHT to the entrance tabernacle/temple to be offered there. The courtyards were considered the entrance since the temple structure itself was a much smaller building in the center.

Wasn't the courtyard an okay place to assist the worshippers? The temple complex was made up of five sections. In the innermost section was the actual temple building itself. Only priests and Levites could enter it. Around that was a courtyard that only men could enter. Around that was a courtyard that only women and Gentiles could enter. Around that were the walls to the temple complex which also contained storage rooms, apartments, and so on.

Jesus was upset that the animal sales and currency exchanges were being made in the courtyard. (The



courtyard was the size of several football fields.) So he drove them all from the temple area and declared, "How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" (John 2:14-16).

Then, three years later right after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus once more entered the temple complex, and once more drove out the merchants and currency exchangers shouting, "It is written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers' " (Matthew 21:12-13).

The first time he objected to them being there. The second time he objected that they were not only there, but they were robbing the people, probably with exorbitant prices.

Well, what if the church bizarre were moved away from the church building with easier access by the general public, people who do not attend that church? The apostle John in his old age probably 60 years later said, "It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans" (3<sup>rd</sup> John 7).

Who are the pagans? Basically, they non-Christians. And how are we to judge who is a Christian and non-Christian when they file up to give us their money? Often, we can't.

Well, what about the church going into some kind of business anonymously? Large denominations sometimes do that. Many business leaders were converted in the early church, but we have no evidence they used their expertise to develop a business for the church to run and raise money for it.

"But what if I have some property I want to sell and give the proceeds to the church?" someone asks. That is provided for. Other situations are too. Read on.

*God, I never thought of it that way. I guess it*

*gives me an idea of how outsiders must think of us - always thinking of ways to make money. At least, when we advertise it, it must seem that way to them. No wonder they think all churches want is their money. Forgive me.*

## Creating Heaven

So, the question remains: If we are on a tight budget, where are we going to get the money to give others? If our personal outgo is that close to our income, it may take time to adjust. it.

The most helpful book I have run into was apparently written by a Buddhist, Timothy Miller: *How to Want What You Have*.

Some people play sports with the attitude that they have to win every time. We look down on this type of attitude, but most of us have the same attitude toward money. We must always be the winner; otherwise we're considered failures.

We are trying to meet spiritual starvation with material things. We go to work so we can come home so we can eat so we can sleep so we can go back to work. We buy bigger houses, nicer cars, send our children to college so they can get a good job, and come home to eat and sleep and go back to work. The author concludes that it is "like a macabre marathon dance that can only be escaped by dying. [6]"

What is this emptiness we are so driven to fill but which is never filled? We long, in the midst of all our treading water, to feel some sense of significance. Each one of us is just one in a world of millions, a world that

hardly even and hardly ever notices us. We want to feel like we did not live life in vain.

We humans, who live in a material world, are naturally drawn to material things as proof to others and to ourselves that we are significant. And we use mathematics to prove it. We count our pay check, the number of times we went out to eat, the number of shoes or shirts in our closet, the number of cars in our driveway, the height of our house.

Isn't it strange that, with such a strong instinct for more, humans do not have an instinct that tells us when we've accumulated enough. Enough always eludes us. We are self-driven to believe that enough is just around the corner - one more promotion, one more raise, one more award, one more car.

The brilliant author of this book went on to explain that we must retrain our instincts for more material things and develop drives to show people compassion, savor each moment as a fulfilling experience, express gratitude for what we do have, and finally to meditate.

These are all good. But, let's take this deeper in the direction of Christianity. What does God say we live on this earth for? Our foremost purpose in being born is to die (Psalm 22:29, LBV). [7] Is that morbid? Not to Christians. Are we Christians?

The psalmist said, "But as for me, my contentment is not in wealth but in seeing you and knowing all is well between us. And when I AWAKE IN HEAVEN, I will be fully satisfied, for I will see you FACE TO FACE" (Psalm 17:15 LBV). [8]

Just before Paul's death, he said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS! which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day" (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:8).

Earth is just the corridor to heaven. We've got to travel through earth to get to heaven. Heaven is so indescribable that God uses earthly terms to try to describe it. Which terms? Those used to describe the wealth we so irresistibly crave and cannot get enough of here on earth.

Yes, in our frantic rushing here and there and everywhere, seldom resting, never able to get rid of the addiction for more, we are frustrated because deep down we know we cannot have it all. Oh, but that's wrong. We CAN have it all. But not here. Once we realize it is heaven we are frantically seeking, we can put things into perspective.

I guess, God, that I have tried to purchase heaven. I always knew money couldn't buy true happiness, but always made a joke out of it. It's not a joke, is it, God? Money can rule me, can't it? Help me look at myself as I really am.

## **Give and You Will Receive**

Do we want heaven? Do we want others to have heaven? That's what it all boils down to. Giving is one way to help both ourselves and others.

People have no problem giving when they see a true need. But they must be convinced in their own hearts it is a true need. It isn't something church leaders need to be harping after them about.

As we saw above, Paul never insisted that the church at Corinth lead a congregational campaign of giving for the poor Christians in Jerusalem and Judea. It

was originally their idea (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:10), then he took that same idea to other congregations and told them about it. They all liked the idea and began saving for the poor. But by then, the Corinthians had gotten bored with the idea.

Paul simply told them, "I bragged to others about you, and now you're backing out. You're embarrassing yourselves and me" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:2-5).

So, what caused them to give in the first place? The Philippians in Macedonia expressed it best. They were poor, and Paul did not expect anyone to give so much they ended up poorer than the ones they were helping (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:13-15). Even though they were poor, they gave out of "overflowing JOY" that "welled up" within them. "Entirely ON THEIR OWN, they urgently pleaded with us for the PRIVILEGE of sharing in this service to the saints" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:2-4).

Three things were involved: Joy, self-motivation, attitude of honor and privilege.

*Yes, God, that is true. I've experienced it myself. I've given to people who didn't even ask, because I saw their need. It does work, doesn't it? Just show me the need.*

## **The Nitty Gritty**

Perhaps much more time needs to be devoted in our Sunday meetings to the needs for which the congregation gives. In fact, it may be that seldom are the needs even mentioned. As far as the members are concerned, a cold plate is passed into which cold cash is

placed.

If the leadership seems to be dragging the money out of people, perhaps the people don't see it as a need, then perhaps the congregation shouldn't be involved in it. So, how should it be done?

## **BUILDING**

Ninety-nine percent of congregations are giving toward their building, whether mortgage payments, rent payments, insurance payments, and utilities and upkeep. We need to get past those cold and impersonal bricks and light bulbs and carpet cleaner. What is the building being used for?

Is it being used for Sunday worship and occasional potlucks, and sitting empty the rest of the time? Perhaps the congregation should be renting a school somewhere instead.

Is the building being used during the week, but only by the members? In that case, its cost is not going to save the lost. James 5:20 tells us, "Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins." If we were born to die so we can go to heaven, then others are too, and need to be helped to learn how. Just as Jesus attracted people's attention before his sermons by performing miracles that helped people, we can use our buildings to do things that help people.

People in the community need our building. And, since the church is not to have a business, we should not be charging for it, other than deposits to cover possible damage. When we charge for the use of our building, we're no better than any other worldly organization.

Our building can be used for dependency and co-dependency groups, for scouts, for the elderly, for weddings and funerals, for service organizations such as the Lion's Club, and so on. Instead of asking for payment,

we can ask one of us be allowed to go through a 20-minute session with their group explaining why our congregation exists and how to become Christians. That's pretty cheap payment.

As a result, the community will see the church as being there for their benefit without being money grubbing. Also, it will give an opportunity to explain salvation to people who might have never listened to us. And last, it is a way of getting people through the physical and psychological barrier of the front door, in order to get them feeling at ease and possibly interested in returning on Sunday.

There are other uses for the building. Just use your imagination and think of your congregation's interests and talents. On Sundays, before the collection plate is passed around, something should be said about how the building was used that week. If we have nothing to report, perhaps we need to look again at our spiritual motives for having the building.

## **SALARIES**

People know the preacher and his family has to live decently. Also anyone else on the payroll of the church. But what is the church getting in return for their investment?

People on the payroll should be able and willing to get up or have someone else get up and say a few words about what they accomplished on behalf of the congregation that week. They should, however, never be made to feel the congregation is checking up on them. We are lucky to be able to have people more talented than we are to do part of our work for us.

The preacher should get specific (but without naming names if things were done in confidence), because the members are workers together with them when we support them. The elderly apostle John told

someone who was housing traveling preachers in his home that it was an example for all of us, "so that we may work together for the truth" (3<sup>rd</sup> John 8).

The members of the congregation have a right to know what they did vicariously through the minister the previous week. Also the secretary. Perhaps she typed fifty letters, sorted 300 attendance cards, called 30 people before she found enough volunteers to provide food for the funeral dinner coming up, and so on. And the janitor. We need to hear week after week what he does week after week. If his work sounds monotonous, perhaps it is. We need to hear that he is willing to do the monotonous in order to serve us.

Speaking of the secretary, what are we giving her to include in the church bulletin? Is it exclusively for inspirational articles? Is there anything in it that talks about the needs of the congregation by people who are sick or elderly? Is there anything in it about the needs in the community that individual members might be able to help with in the name of the church? (More on this in the chapter on announcements.)

And the missionaries we support. We need to get a monthly report from them, and parts of it shared with the congregation each Sunday.

Does all this take time? You bet. But it is the only way to motivate people to keep giving and keep wanting to give.

## **BENEVOLENT WORK**

What benevolent work did "we" do the previous week through our cold cash in that cold collection plate? If we did not help anyone in need at all, perhaps there is something wrong. Nearly every week, most ministers are approached by drifters coming to the building for a handout. The congregation seldom if ever hears about it. Perhaps we should.



Do you know that when we were told in the Bible to give alms, we were never told to make sure the people we were helping were worthy or would use the money wisely? True, there are ways to help them where they do not get cash, such as giving them food out of the congregation's supply, or putting them up in a motel, or paying their bus fare or utility bill. But sometimes they just need the cash. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

As far as people deserving our benevolence, are we worthy or do we use our blessings wisely that God gives us? God "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get....And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?" (Matthew 5:45-47).

Was there anything in the newspaper last week about a person or family needing help? A member should feel free to bring it to the attention of the congregation. If the treasurer says there isn't enough in the treasury for this worthy cause, perhaps some of the members will want to give a little extra that week.

What about personal Bible studies? Has your minister started any lately? Anonymity may be necessary, but you still have a right to know that he is doing it, and even perhaps what issues are being discussed. After all, you may ask your minister to deliver a sermon on it so everyone can learn more about that subject.

Has your congregation purchased any Bibles or song books or Bible school material to be used in teaching publicly or in private? The congregation has a right to know about it. It's their money.

Cold hard cash in a cold hard collection plate while someone sings or during a lull in the worship is

murder on the giving of a congregation. When people see a need, they will give, especially when they can identify with something.

If leaders bring up a program and no one is giving toward it, perhaps it needs to be stopped. There are hundreds of programs that congregations could be involved in. It just depends on the interests of the members and the needs of the church and community.

Paul said, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:7).

When we give, we must keep in mind, not the cold plate and cold cash, but that fact that "this service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of THANKS TO GOD. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, MEN WILL PRAISE GOD" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:12-13).

Thank you, God, for explaining this in your word. I don't guess I ever understood it. You don't ask for money, you ask for food. You don't ask for dollars, you ask for clothes. You don't ask for coins, you ask for Bibles. I'm catching on, God. I'm catching on.

## **The Gift of Giving**

How can we honestly tell whether we have given from our heart? This is an individual thing. Probably the

best barometer is to ask ourselves this: When I give to that cause, do I really want to give more? If the answer is yes, then you are giving enough within your ability and from your heart. The cheerless giver will resent any amount that they give.

But, is it fair to the people who do give a lot, to be in a congregation where there are those who give just a penance? There will always be people within a congregation who have very little to give. They may be retired and on a low fixed income. They may be single parents who have to work day and night to keep their family clothed and fed and in decent shelter.

It is an equality thing. For everyone is given a different gift. Romans 12:6-8 describes it beautifully.

"We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is PROPHECYING [knowing God's word], let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is SERVING, let him serve; if it is TEACHING, let him teach; if it is ENCOURAGING, let him encourage; if it is CONTRIBUTING to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is LEADERSHIP, let him govern diligently; if it is showing MERCY, let him do it cheerfully."

Being in a position to give monetarily toward the material programs of the church is a gift. It should be used with as much faith and sincerity as someone who has the gift of teaching classes, or encouraging the depressed, or serving the sick. All are equal in God's eyes.

If there is no one around who wants to know what is in God's word, the Bible, the gift of prophesying is not going to be used. If there is no one around who has physical needs, the gift of serving is not going to be used. If there is no one around who needs to understand God's word, the gift of teaching is not going to be used. When there is no one around who is depressed, the

gift of encouraging is not going to be used. When there is no one around who has monetary needs, the gift of contributing is not going to be used.

Givers must be shown a reason to give. Then they will give generously and not grudgingly or out of obligation.

*This helps me, too, God, because I can't give as much as I want to. I have felt so guilty about it. But that's just not my talent. You've given that talent to someone else, and given me a talent to encourage people. Thank you.*

## **Second-Generation Church Accounts**

**Justin, who lived about 150 AD, wrote this in *Apology I*, 67:** "We always remember one another. Those who have, provide for all those in want....Those who have means and are willing, each according to his own choice, gives what he wills, and what is collected is deposited with the president. He provides for the orphans and widows, those who are in want on account of sickness or some other cause, those who are in bonds [jail] and strangers who are sojourning, and in a word he becomes the protector of all who are in need." [9]

**Justin, in *Apology I*, 14:** "We who loved

more than anything else ways of acquiring wealth and possessions now bring what we have into a common treasury and share with everyone who is in need." [10]

**Tertullian, who lived about 170 AD, wrote this in *Apology xxxix:1-5*:** "Although we have a kind of money-chest, it is not gathered from the fees of our leaders as if religion were a matter of purchase. Every individual puts in a small contribution on the monthly day, or when he wishes and only if he wishes and is able. For no one is compelled, but he contributes voluntarily. These contributions are trust funds of piety.

"They are not spent on banquets...or drinking clubs; but for feeding and burying the poor, for boys and girls destitute of property and parents; and further for old people confined to the house, and victims of shipwreck; and any who are in the mines, who are exiled to an island, or who are in prison merely on account of God's church....So great a work of love burns a brand upon us in regarding to some. 'See,' they say, 'how they love one another.' " [11]

**Dionysus of Corinth wrote about 170, and quoted in *Eusebius Church History IV.xxiii.10*:** "For this practice has prevailed with you from the very beginning, to do good to all the brethren in every way, and to send contributions to many churches in every city. Thus refreshing the needy in their want, and furnishing to the brethren condemned to the mines." [12]

**Irenaeus of Lyons in Gaul (France), wrote about 180 *Against Heresies IV*,xiv.3:** "And instead of the tithes which the law commanded, the Lord said to divine everything we have with the poor. And he said to love not only our neighbors but also our enemies, and to be givers and sharers not only with the good but also to be liberal givers toward those who take away our possessions." [13]

**Clement of Alexandria wrote about 200 AD *Who Is the Rich Man that is Saved?* 33:** "Do not judge who is worthy and who unworthy, for it is possible for you to be mistaken in your opinion. In the uncertainty of ignorance it is better to do good to the unworthy for the sake of the worthy than by guarding against those who are less good not to encounter the good. For by being sparing and trying to test those who are well-deserving or not, it is possible for you to neglect some who are loved by God." [14]

## ENDNOTES

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