

GIVING AS AN ACT OF SERVICE TO GOD –asaolu@yahoo.com

We serve God by serving others just as we show our love to him by expressing or demonstrating love other others. Since the first teacher has addressed definitions and basics, let us consider TWO questions in this study:

1. Are there instructions and examples on giving as a service in the New Testament?

Christ said “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” - Luke 6:38.

Jesus taught about sacrificial/generous giving unto God (Luke 21:1-4) and unto man (Matthew 5:42), especially to fellow believers (Matthew 7:6). He instructs that our giving must be with a pure heart, devoid of malice, hypocrisy or vain-glory (Matthew 5:23-24, Luke 18:12). **Examples:**

- a) Some women (Luke 8:1-3, Mark 15:40-41) and rich, influential men (Matthew 27:57-60, Mark 15:43) supported Christ's ministry financially and materially.
- b) At inception, several saints at the Jerusalem church served others with their goods and possessions –Acts 2:44-46; **4:32-37**. Joses was singled out for several possible reasons: (1) He probably was a pioneer among the volunteers (2) He was a visiting Jew from Cyprus willing to give for the benefit of strangers (3) He was a Levite who must have labored/saved to acquire the land he sold to give the funds to the church, he most likely did not inherit it. (4) He must have given when it was most needed for the apostles to nickname him ‘the man of consolation.’ We should not give out of envy or in competition for pride and false glory, as Bro & Sis Ananias tried to.
- c) Dorcas (Thabitha) of Joppa was “full of good works and almsdeeds” –Acts 9:36-42. She was a true disciple who understood that (1) Saints are created for good works –Eph 2:10 (2) Christians are equipped for good works - 2 Tim. 3:16-17 (3) Are to be zealous for them - Titus 2:11-14 (4) Are to be rich in good works - 1 Tim. 6:17-19, Matt. 6:19-21. The beauty of Jesus was seen in Dorcas for she was truly missed by the saints and widows, there was no need to hire professional mourners to cry at her planned funeral. God used Peter to raise her to continue for a season in her life of service. From her we learn this principle “*Do what you can with what you have, rather than dream about what you would or could do with riches you don't have.*”
- d) Lydia of Phillipi was a devout proselyte and merchant who became a Christian –Acts 16:12-15. She had a good heart and was eager to support the preachers; she literally begged to be of service!
- e) Gaius was a great giver who was positively mentioned severally in the scriptures. He was one of two people Paul could remember that he personally baptized at Corinth (1 Cor 1:14) who later accompanied him on some occasions (Acts 19:29), was his host and that of the church (Rm 16:23). He received a good testimony worthy of emulation in 3 John 1:1-6

2. Does 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Constitute a Binding Pattern? (-Wayne Jackson)

Paul wrote: “*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do you. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come*” (1 Corinthians 16:1-2 ASV). There are several important elements in this context.

First, since the apostle was answering questions submitted to him by the church (“Now concerning....” – 1 Cor 7:1; 8:1; 12:1) they probably became aware of church contributions into the local treasury and needed some clarification.

The term “order” denotes a command not a mere suggestion -1 Chro 23:27-31, Luke 17:9-10. In spite of its obligatory nature, giving should be viewed as a thrilling blessing, not as a burdensome matter for grumbling (2 Cor 9:7).

If there is no “pattern” for raising church finances, the door is wide open for any moral method for obtaining income. In this connection, it must be emphasized that “giving” is the only authorized method for financing the work of the church of

God. The church, as an organized body, is not authorized to operate businesses, conduct pay-at-the-door concerts, etc. The kingdom of Christ is not a commercial enterprise.

Second, the Christian is to contribute every Sunday. The text literally reads, “[U]pon the first day of every week . . .” (see NASB, ESV). Moreover, the verb “lay by” is a present tense form, suggesting a regular, intermittent activity.

We must insist that while the specific use of this collection involved relief of the destitute among the saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26), the underlying principle of the passage serves as a precedent for the manner in which the church is to gather its financial resources for the implementation of any divinely authorized work.

Though Paul addressed problems unique to certain churches, the principles he laid down were binding universally. Several times in this letter the apostle emphasizes that his instructions are not unique to this congregation (1 Corinthians 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33-34).

“The only reason that can be assigned for requiring the thing to be done on the first day of the week, is that on that day the Christians were accustomed to meet, and what each one had laid aside from his weekly gains could be treasured up, i.e., put into the common treasury of the church.” **It is erroneous to suggest that Paul was merely urging his brethren to save something “at home” (a common assertion, which is a misguided interpretation, not an accurate translation).** This would have defeated the apostle’s explicitly stated purpose of not being forced to contact each Christian individually when he came. The mention of the first day of every week along with the purpose that when I come no collections will have to be made suggests that the setting aside of money would not be just the setting apart within one’s own possessions but the setting aside of the money by presenting it to the leaders of the church (cf. Acts 4:34–5:2). The word *logeia*, (collection) seems to refer to a public and group action, not a private one. The reference to congregational “messengers” (2 Corinthians 8:23) implies an organized church activity.

Each Christian is to give “as he may prosper,” or “according to his ability” (Acts 11:29). This is proportional giving. Amazingly, some Christians as typified by the Macedonians often give even beyond their ability (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). Those who have more should give more (both in amount and percentage). When the more prosperous generously give of their abundance to compensate for the deficit of the poorer folk, the type of “equality” that God desires will prevail (see 2 Corinthians 8:12-15).

CONCLUSION: God is the Lord from whom all blessings flow; He has made us stewards or managers of various resources (viz. money, time, talent, etc.) to serve as individual helpers unto others, particularly in the brotherhood. Compare Mt. 25:31-45 with Jms 1:27; 2:14-16. This is not a license for anyone to become ‘lazy’ and always burden the brethren -2 Thes 3:7-13, Eph 4:28. We must also give to the church purse every Sunday to provide funds for her work.

ADDENDUM Galatians 6:6 &10 are verses that have been mis-translated, mis-interpreted and mis-applied in recent ages: *“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things... As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”*

When lifted out of CONTEXT they have been used to support fanciful theories but a contextual reading shows that the passage is primarily discussing ‘taking part in or doing and propagating that which is upright, moral and spiritually good.’

Acts 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

1 Corinthians 9:13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. 15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.