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Stewardship with Integrity
8:10 to 9:5

Stewardship with integrity DIG: Why is this collection for the Jerusalem congregation so important? What dangers or suspicions accompany Paul? How does Paul attempt to diminish those criticisms? What commends Titus for his role of ensuring stewardship with integrity in the relief work? What qualifications should a person have to handle money for God's work? What benefits do believers receive when they practice grace giving?

REFLECT: How might the equality principle help you decide which needs your immediate attention? How do the ministries or people you contribute to practice Paul's principle in 8:20-21? Why is it especially critical for Messianic congregations and churches? Are you generous with money? To become more generous, what would need to change? What discourages you about giving? What have you learned that encourages you to give?

Giving is not something we do, but something we are.



There are few topics in the congregations of **God** more sensitive than that of money. Any mention of **giving**, tithing, or fund-raising campaigns is sure to be perceived by some as inappropriate, intrusive, and even offensive. Critics accuse spiritual leaders of constantly appealing for money and often of mishandling what they receive. Unfortunately, there is some truth in those accusations. Nevertheless, every believer must understand the divine will with regard to money, its use by

believers and in the congregations of **ADONAI**. **Giving** in particular is a significant element in **God's** design for the life of a believer. **Giving** advances **His** Kingdom, glorifies **His** name, meets the needs of others, and lays up treasure in heaven, bringing **God's** blessing in this life and the next.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **Your** great **love** that cost **You** so much. Thank **You** that no cost was too high for **You** to pay. **You ransom Your children from the kingdom of darkness (Colossians 1:13)** and then bless us with **Your righteousness (Second Corinthians 5:21)** so we may live forever with **You** in heaven! This causes me to want to give back to you all I can. Sometimes problems and suffering on earth seem very big, but they can never match the shame and pain **(Hebrews 12:2)** that **You** endured. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** Thank **You** for such great **love** and for the joy of giving back to **You**! In **Your** holy **Son's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Believers are to be careful stewards of the resources that **the Lord** has entrusted to us. We must be wise about earning, saving, investing, and spending money. And just as we are careful in those areas, so we must also be in how we **give** our money. This passage is a rich contribution to Scripture's teaching about the privilege of **giving**. On the surface, this passage appears to be nothing more than some passing notes about an event that took place over two thousand years ago. Yet, it contains timeless and practical principles that define stewardship for all believers.[189]

Paul gives nine examples of stewardship with integrity.

1. Stewardship with integrity calls for giving that is voluntary (8:10a): As I say, in regard to this matter of **the collection** for the poor believers in Jerusalem, **I am only giving an opinion. Paul** did not pressure **the Macedonians** to **give** a specific percent, but rather commended **them** because **they gave of their own free will (8:3)**. **Giving** does not involve a fixed amount or percentage, but is entirely voluntary (**to see link click Bn – A Biblical Model for Giving: Giving is voluntary**). Any kind of compulsory **giving** to **the Lord** is not the biblical way. Stewardship with integrity involves people **giving** not from outward coercion, but from inward devotion. **A year ago, you were not only the first to take action but the first to want to do so,** which again reveals that they gave freely, not under compulsion.

2. Stewardship with integrity calls for faithfulness to complete the commitment (8:10b-11a): It is not easy to carry things through to completion; it takes discipline, devotion, and faithfulness. All **the Corinthians'** good intentions would have meant little had **they** failed to complete **the collection**. Therefore, **Paul** urged **them, "Now it would be to your advantage to finish what you started, so that your eagerness in wanting to commence the project may be matched by your eagerness to complete it.** The project had been halted because lies of **the false apostles** (see **Af – The Problem of the False Apostles**) against **Paul** had raised doubts about **his** integrity. Nothing cripples people's willingness to **give** as much as a loss of confidence in their leaders. But since the relationship between **the apostle** and **the Corinthians** had been restored, it was time for **them to complete** what **they** had started.

3. Stewardship with integrity calls for amounts that are proportionate to what one has (8:11:b-12): Although **Paul** expected **the Corinthians** to **give** generously, **he** did not expect **them** to **give** beyond **their** means. **As you contribute from what you have. For if the eagerness to give is there, the acceptability of the gift will be measured by what you have, not by what you don't have.** Some of **the Corinthians** may have been using **their** lack of resources as an excuse not to **give**. It is true that those who, like **the poor widow (Mark 12:43-44),** have minimal resources can only **give** a little, while those with substantial resources can **give** larger amounts. But with **ADONAI,** the amount is not the issue. The issue is an attitude of the heart. **He** expects believers to **give** in proportion to their resources, not more, but certainly not less.

4. Stewardship with integrity calls for giving that balances resources in the body of Messiah (8:13-15): Some of **the Corinthians** may also have been reluctant to **give** because of a charge of favoritism leveled against **Paul** by **the false apostles**. **They** accused **him** of being prejudiced in favor of the predominantly Jewish believers in Jerusalem, since he was also Jewish. Anticipating that charge, **Paul** assured **the Corinthians** that **the collection** was **not for the relief of others. He** was not out to make the rich poor and the poor rich. This does not mean, of course, that the church should support those who refuse to **work (Second Thessalonians 3:10). His** goal was to bring about **a balancing of resources, a kind of mutual benefit: at present your abundance can help** the Jewish believers, but that might not always be the case. The fortunes of life might change, and a time may come when persecution or disaster could impoverish **the Corinthians**. Should that happen, the Jerusalem believers' abundance would

then **help the Corinthians' need.**

Paul illustrated **his** point with a quote from **Isra'el's** wilderness wanderings from **the TaNaKh.** In response to **the people's grumbling (Exodus 16:2-3), ADONAI** promised to send **them bread from heaven (Exodus 16:4).** When they **gathered** manna, **some gathered much and some gathered little.** Yet, he who gathered **much had nothing extra, and he who gathered little had nothing lacking (Second Corinthians 8:15; Exodus 16:18).** Apparently, **they** shared what **they** had **gathered**, so each person and family had enough to eat. So it is with the body of **Messiah**; those who have **an abundance** share with those who are **in need**.

5. Stewardship with integrity calls for submission to godly leadership (8:16-17): **Paul** anticipated and answered another potential objection to the offering; namely, that the project was **his** alone. **Now I thank God for making Titus as devoted to you as we are.** But it was not just **Paul's** passion. **ADONAI** had put the same **devotion** for **the collection** in the heart of **Titus**. That **God** had so united the hearts of **Paul** and **Titus** further confirmed that **the collection** was **His** will. Nor could **the false apostles** accuse **Titus** of having a Jewish bias since **he** was a Gentile. Lest anyone think that **Paul** coerced **Titus** into being involved with **the collection**, **the apostle** noted that **he not only responded to our urging, but, being so devoted, he is coming to you on his own initiative.** Forceful, strong-willed leaders can often ram through their projects. But biblically sound stewardship should be led by a plurality of godly leadership. Believers are to be overseen by wise, theologically sound, spiritually mature, godly leadership, who agree to seek the mind of **ADONAI**.

6. Stewardship with integrity calls for accountability (8:18-23): Not only was **Titus**, whom **the Corinthians** knew well and highly respected, involved in **the collection**, but also was an unnamed **brother whose work for the Good News** was **praised in all the congregations (8:18). Paul** had **sent him along with Titus** to **Corinth** to help with **the collection**. The inclusion of this **man** signaled **Paul's** intention to handle matters with absolute honesty and accountability. It further deflected any possible criticism that **he** might misuse the money.

Not only had **Paul** and **Titus** chosen the unnamed **brother** to help oversee **the collection**, but **he had also been appointed by** other **churches to travel with us. He** was not merely one of **Paul's** proteges who would be under **his** thumb. **His** appointment by other **churches** protected from any false accusation that they were

in collusion to mishandle the money. The reason for **the apostle's** concern was not that **he** and **Titus** could not be trusted, but rather that **Paul's enemies** could not be trusted. **They** could not be allowed to make an accusation that would further confuse the already unsettled **Corinthians**. **So that the way we administer this charitable work will bring honor to the Lord and show our eagerness to help** the poor **(8:19).**

So, anticipating **his enemies'** attacks on his credibility, **Paul** took the precaution of involving **the** unnamed **brother** who would accompany **them to show** that **their conduct in dealing with these substantial sums** of money **was above reproach (8:20).** It was a wise safeguard, since **his enemies at Corinth** had accused **him** of being in ministry for the money. Though **Paul** had every right to receive support from **the Corinthians**, **he** did not take it (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Bo – Laying Aside Rights**). **He** wanted to avoid lending credence to the false accusations that **he** was in the ministry for the money.

For we take pains to do what is right not only in the sight of God but also in the sight of other people (Second Corinthians 8:21; Proverbs 3:4 from the Septuagint**).** Some might wonder why **Paul** would care what **other people** thought, as long as **he did right in the sight of the Lord. He** didn't set out to please **others**, but neither was **he** unconcerned about what **they** thought. After all, **they** were the ones **he** was trying to reach with the Good News. He could not allow **his enemies** to make false accusations that might discredit and bring suspicion on **him** before the watching world and hinder **his** preaching of the Gospel.

Paul summarized the members of what amounted to **his** financial committee, reemphasizing **their** noble, unimpeachable character. Further underscoring **his** concern to handle **the collection** with integrity, **Paul sent** a second unknown **brother, one whose diligence we have tested many times in many ways, but who is now all the more diligent because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner who works with me on your behalf; and the** two unknown **brothers with him are emissaries of the congregations and bring honor to the Messiah (8:22-33).** Those two faithful **brothers** were sent by **the Macedonians** to help with **the collection**. This showed the high quality of men the early Church entrusted money to.

7. Stewardship with integrity calls for giving that is an expression of love (8:24): Paul had instructed **the Corinthians** about the importance and procedure

of making **their** contribution. **He** had taken every reasonable precaution to avoid any appearance of impropriety. Now it was time for **the Corinthians** to openly **give** so that all would clearly see **their** generosity. **So the love you show these men will justify our pride in you to them, and through them to the congregations that sent them (8:24).** A loving church is a generous church, and **the Corinthians'** generous **love** would **justify Paul's pride** about the work of **Messiah** in **them**.

8. Stewardship with integrity calls for giving that sets an example (9:1-4): So confident was **Paul** in **the Corinthians** that he felt it was **really no need for me to write you about this offering for God's people** in Jerusalem **– I know how eager you are, and I boast about you to the Macedonians. I tell them, "Corinth has been ready since last year," and it was your zeal that stirred up most of them. But** the rebellion against **Paul** incited by **the false apostles** had apparently halted **their giving**. So **he sent Titus** and **the** two unnamed **brothers so that his boast about them in this regard would not prove hollow, so that they would be ready** and have **the offering** prepared**, as Paul said they would be. Paul** was concerned that **if some Macedonians were to come with me and find you unprepared, we would be humiliated at having been so confident – to say nothing of how you would feel.** To avoid such embarrassment, **Paul** called upon **the Corinthians** to finish what **they** had started, so the completion of **their giving** would be a positive example to others.

9. Stewardship with integrity calls for giving that has overcome the sin of covetousness (9:5): For the reasons listed above, **Paul thought it necessary to urge Titus** and **the** two unnamed **brothers to go on ahead** to **Corinth and prepare their promised gift in plenty of time.** Evidently, **the Corinthians** had promised a specific, large amount, and **Paul** wanted to make sure **it would be ready when he came** so **it would be a genuine gift, not something extracted by pressure (9:5).**[190]

Our greatest encouragement for **giving** is that it pleases **the Lord**, but there is nothing wrong with practicing that kind of **giving** that provokes others to **give**. This does not mean that we should advertise what we do as individuals, because that kind of practice would violate one of the basic principles of **giving**: to **give** discreetly to **the Lord** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Do – When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others**). However, **Paul** was writing to *churches*, and it is not wrong for congregations to announce what they have given collectively. If our motive is to boast, then we are not

practicing grace giving. But if our desire is to provoke others to **give**, then **God's** grace can work through us to help others.[191]