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Giving to God's Work

16: 1-4

Giving to God's work DIG: Why is financial stewardship important to God? What does your bank account reveal about your priorities? Why do you think people withhold their tithe from the Lord? What were Paul's motives for taking up the collection for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem? What are the purposes of tithing? How do you think it relates to other kinds of giving? In what ways is giving an act of worship? What is the value of giving systematically? Why do you think Paul is so specific about giving?

REFLECT: Is your giving more planned or more spontaneous? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each type? How would you explain to a friend Paul's principle of systematic giving? What are some of the struggles you may have when it comes to giving money to God's work? In what ways do you need to grow in this area? What have you learned about setting priorities for how much you will give, and to whom? What in this letter has especially helped you? How can you grow from there?

Giving is an act of worship.



With **Chapter 16 Paul** makes a radical change from the doctrinal to the practical, and the first practical issue **he** discusses is that of giving to **the Lord's** work. **Now, in regard to the collection being made for God's people, you are to do the same as I directed the congregations in Galatia to do (16:1).** On his **First Missionary Journey** (see the commentary on [Acts Bm - Paul's First Missionary Journey](#)), **Paul** had encouraged the churches in **Galatia** not to forget about **the poor in Jerusalem** (see the commentary on [Galatians Ay - Remember the Poor of Jerusalem](#)). Apparently this **collection** was a major part of **his** ministry during his **Third Missionary Journey** (see the commentary on [Acts Ce - Paul's Third Missionary Journey](#)), which not only enabled **him** to bring relief to **the poor in Jerusalem**, but also to facilitate unity between **Jewish** and **Gentile** believers. For **Paul**, it was a matter of mutual benefit, **for the Gentiles having shared with the Jews in spiritual matters, then the Gentiles clearly have a duty to help the Jews in financial matters (Romans 15:27b).** **Gentiles** giving an offering to **the Jews** helped strengthen the **spiritual** bond between the two groups (**Ephesians 2:11-18**). Giving and receiving in **love** always forms a bond between **the giver** and **the receiver**. You cannot share **financial and spiritual matters** without sharing fellowship. The association between the believer's economic sharing and personal sharing is so close in **Paul's** mind that three times he uses the term *koinonia* (usually translated "fellowship") to represent offerings (**Romans 15:26; Second Corinthians 8:4 and 9:13**).

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** forgave our sins so that we could be **reconciled** with **You**. **You** did not merely forgive us and then walk away; rather,*

*fellowship and forgiveness go hand-in-hand. No one will be forgiven who does not have fellowship with **You**. Fellowship with **You** means that we seek to put **You** first in our lives as **You** live in us (**Romans 8:9-11**) and lovingly give us **Your righteousness** through **Yeshua Messiah**. For our sake He (God the Father) made Him (God the Son) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him (Yeshua) we might become the righteousness of God (**Second Corinthians 5:21**).*

*Loving **You** is what opens the door to being able to have fellowship with **You**. Jesus answered him: **If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him (John 14:23)**. We desire to show our love for **You** by how we give **You** our time, our resources and our ministry. It is a joy to please **You** because you are holy and a wonderful **Father!** Thank **You** that **You** did not make us **Your** slaves but you call us **Your children**. **Your** steadfast love and faithfulness watches over us (**Psalms 61:7**). It is a joy to give **You** my time, my money, my thoughts and my life. In **Your** holy **Son's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Obviously that is not the only economic obligation we have. The parable of the Good Samaritan makes it abundantly clear that we should minister personally and financially to anyone in need, regardless of religion, culture, or circumstances (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Gw - The Parable of the Good Samaritan](#)). Paul also teaches that **as the opportunity arises we should do what is good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith (Galatians 6:10 NASB)**. It is not simply that one local church supports its own membership and ministry, as did the first Jewish believers did in Jerusalem, but that all churches support other believers and churches as there is need.⁵¹⁶

What stands out here is why Paul expects **the Corinthians** to participate in **the collection**. There is a strong note of authority in **his** words. **He** offered no reasons for participation; rather, using a simple command **he** had directed **the Galatians** to do so. On several occasions in this letter, Paul has indicated that **he** expects **the Corinthians** to do as **he** says because **he** is, after all, **their apostle** and **their teacher**. What makes this command in **Chapter 16** stand out even more is that when Paul comes back to the topic of the collection in **Second Corinthians Chapters 8 and 9**, **he** specifically says: **I am not issuing an order; rather, I am testing the genuineness of your love against the diligence of others (Second Corinthians 8:8)**. This suggests that a significant change in the

relationship between **Paul** and **the Corinthians** had taken place between **First Corinthians**, where **he** needed to motivate **them** to become participants in **the collection**, and **Second Corinthians** (see the commentary on **Second Corinthians Ao - Paul's Painful Visit**), where **he** didn't.⁵¹⁷

With this sentence **Paul** proceeds to detail the instructions **he** had **given** to the churches of **Galatia**, which **the Corinthians** were to follow as well. **On the first day of every week**, which is Sunday. The early Church began the tradition of meeting, not on the Jewish Shabbat, but on **Sunday, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7)**. **Let each one of you set some money aside, according to his resources**. This not only convinces us that the Church met on **Sunday**, but that its worship included the regular giving of money. **God** did not place upon the believers the requirement of the tithe. Instead, **He** wants us to **give** out of the generosity of our hearts, not because we *have* to, but because we *want* to (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Do - When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others**). Our giving should not be based on pressure or periodic emotional appeals, but on regular, willing, and grateful commitment of our money to **the Lord**, to **His people**, and to **His work**. **And save** (Greek: *thesaurizo*, from which we get *thesaurus*, a collection, **and** represents a storehouse, treasury, chest, or the like where valuables are stored) **it up. So that when I come I won't have to do fundraising**, the work would have been entirely done (**16:2 NASB**). No pressure, no gimmicks, no emotion. A need had to be met, and **the Corinthians** were capable of helping out.⁵¹⁸

And when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the people you have approved, and I will send them to carry your gift to Yerushalayim (16:3). Because **Paul** hoped **the collection** would be rather significant, **he** knew that **he** could be under suspicion if **he** were to carry **it** all by **himself** (or even with **his** trusted associates **Timothy**, **Titus**, and perhaps **Luke**). Thus, **he** suggests that **their gift** be transported by some representatives of **their** own choosing, for whom **letters of introduction**, which were frequently used in the ancient world to certify authentic representatives, would be written.

It is interesting to read in **Acts 20** the wide variety of **people** who did accompany **Paul** on **his** return to **Jerusalem** after **his Third Missionary Journey**. Listed are **people** from all the major areas from which **Paul** gathered funds (although no one is mentioned from Achaia); from **Galatia**, Gaisu of **Derbe** and Timothy from **Lystra**; from **Macedonia**, Sopater of Bera, and Aristarchus and Secundus of **Thessalonica**; from Asia (**Ephesus**), Tychicus and Trophimus, and (indirectly) **Luke** from **Troas**.

Why was such a large group necessary? There are several reasons. There could be no suspicion of Paul's running off with the money. **Second Corinthians 12:16-18** hints that some in **Corinth** thought **Paul** may have been **tricking them** through the collection. Moreover, with all of these **Gentiles** accompanying **Paul**, **they** would symbolize the entire **Gentile** segment of the Church bringing **their gift** to the mother Messianic congregation. Finally, as substantial as **the collection** eventually became, spreading the coins among various individuals would reduce the possible interest from potential thieves.⁵¹⁹

It is incumbent on every congregation to entrust its property and funds into the hands of godly, responsible elders. **The funds** of the early believers were first entrusted to **the apostles (Acts 4:35)**. As **their** responsibilities grew, however, **the apostles** needed to be relieved of the job of disbursing funds for such things as feeding the poor **Greek speaking widows**. Therefore, **deacons** were selected to carry out that task (see the commentary on **Acts Av - Deacons Anointed for Service**). The qualifications were not financial or commercial, but moral and spiritual. **God's** funds should only be put in the hands of a congregation's most godly elders, who will prayerfully and in the power of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, supervise its use, as priests who present the offerings of **the people** to **ADONAI**.

If it seems appropriate that I go too, they will go along with me (16:4). **Paul's** point here is that he would accompany the gift to Jerusalem only if it turned out to be an offering that would indicate true generosity and that he would not be embarrassed to be associated with. He was encouraging **the Corinthians** to **give** freely from **their** hearts in an outpouring of **love** and concern. **YHVH** made all of **His** creation to **give**. **He** made the sun, the moon, the stars, the clouds, the earth, and the plants to **give**. But fallen mankind is the most reluctant **giver** in all of **God's** creation. One of the surest signs of a saved redeemed person, is the willingness to **give**.⁵²⁰