

The Collection Of The Saints

Introduction. One of the blessings as well as an important responsibility for the Christian is the practice of assembling regularly with other Christians. We have an example of Christians assembling in Acts 20:7 and we have an explicit command not to forsake our assembling together in Hebrews 10:25.

The purpose of our assembling is threefold: (1) to express praise and devotion to God and Christ; (2) to exhort and encourage our brethren to greater service; and, (3) to receive such encouragement ourselves.

The church of God is engaged in the greatest mission under heaven. Money is an absolute necessity in carrying on its work and hence the proper use of money becomes an important theme in the New Testament and assumes an important place in the Christian's life. When God gave us His plan for the church, it included a commandment to give. Giving is a very individual matter. Individual enterprise makes giving possible (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13; Ephesians 4:28). The church is not to enter into some business enterprise in order to be able to finance its work.

I. *The Morals Of Giving*

A. Stewardship (Luke 16:1-14).

1. Christians are stewards. Stewards are trustees or caretakers of that which belongs to another.
2. We must be found faithful as good stewards (1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2) and must not waste our goods (Luke 16:1).
3. We must some day render account of our stewardship (Romans 14:12).
4. We must not hoard for our own security (Luke 12:13-21).
5. God does not allow us to take out all that we want or feel that we need and give Him a little of what is left. He demands a "first fruit offering" (Leviticus 23:9-14; Matthew 6:33).
6. It is then not a question of how much of our substance we are willing to give to the Lord, but on the contrary, the question is, "How much of what the Lord has entrusted to me shall I keep?"

B. Fellowship (Acts 2:42).

1. Fellowship is a coordination, mutual participation and effort.
2. We have fellowship in love (1 Peter 1:22; Colossians 2:2).
3. We have fellowship in suffering (Galatians 6:2).
4. We have fellowship in service (Galatians 2:9-10; Philippians 1:5; 4:16).
5. We have fellowship in finance (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:12-15). Equality in bearing the financial burden of the church

does not mean one giving as much as another but each one giving according to his ability. Individual ability is the basis of personal responsibility (Matthew 25:41-44). One cannot be in "full fellowship" until he is doing his part (Mark 12:41-44).

C. Discipleship (Matthew 16:24).

1. Discipleship requires self-sacrifice and giving up the world (Luke 9:57-62; Matthew 19:27-29).
2. The rich young ruler failed in this respect (Matthew 19:16-22).
3. Christ is our pattern (Philippians 2:5-8; 2 Corinthians 8:9).
Measure yourself by this standard and do not be afraid of giving too much.

D. Love (2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 8, 24).

1. Consecration of ourselves is the basis of giving.
2. We cannot serve both God and mammon (Luke 16:13-15; Matthew 6:19-24).

II. ***The Motives In Giving***

A. Giving is a divine command (Matthew 5:42; Luke 6:38).

B. Helping the poor will obtain the Lord's help (Psalm 41:1-3).

C. Giving makes us like God in that we manifest His graciousness (Luke 6:35-38; 2 Corinthians 8:9).

D. Giving enlarges the heart when sincerely done and purifies it of petty scruples and burdensome follies (Luke 11:38-42).

E. Giving lends acceptance to our prayers (Acts 10:1-4).

F. Giving is a means of laying up treasure in heaven (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

G. Giving opens for those who practice it the doorway into the bounties of God's grace (Galatians 6:6-10; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Luke 6:38).

H. Giving is a means of glorifying God (2 Corinthians 9:12-15).

I. Giving is the way to be happy (Acts 20:35).

III. ***The Manner Of Giving***

A. The New Testament plan (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

1. It is periodic -- "Upon the first day of the week."

2. It is personal -- "Let each one of you."

3. It is provident -- "Lay by in store."

4. It is proportionate -- "As he may prosper."

5. It is preventive -- "That there be no collections when I come."

6. Sometimes it is argued that this is the plan for raising money only for benevolence in the church. It remains, however, that divine wisdom led Paul to give this plan to Corinth for raising money and good reasoning will convince one that if it will work in raising money for one righteous cause, it will work for another and for all.

- B. Other principles governing the matter of giving.
 - 1. It must be voluntary, the free will offering of a willing, liberal heart and an open hand (2 Corinthians 8:3; 9:7).
 - 2. It must be purposeful, planned and systematic (2 Corinthians 8:3; 9:7). The church should have a planned program of work and every Christian should have a planned program of giving toward making that work possible.
 - 3. It must be done confidently. He who believes God's promises can give liberally without any fear of being caused to suffer by so doing (2 Corinthians 9:8-11; Matthew 6:3). The Macedonians gave themselves first (2 Corinthians 8:5).

IV. ***The Measure Of Giving***

- A. The first example we have of giving is that of Abram and Melchizedek. When Abram met Melchizedek on the way back from his victory, he gave Melchizedek a tenth of all his spoils (Genesis 14:17-20). Melchizedek blessed Abram and then went on his way.
- B. God commanded the children of Israel to give a tenth of all their produce. The children of Israel had no choice about their giving. No emphasis was put on the attitude of heart. God also set aside a tenth to be given to the Levites because they had no possession (Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 14:22-29; Numbers 18:24-28).
- C. With the New Testament, these principles changed:
 - 1. Giving is measured by ability (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:12).
 - 2. Our offering should be given in a bountiful manner (2 Corinthians 9:6).
 - 3. There is grace in liberality (2 Corinthians 8:2, 6-7). It is not how little but how much we can give and how great is the need is the principle of liberality (Acts 2:45).

Conclusion. The need to examine giving is the need to examine ourselves. Giving to the Lord involves a great self-sacrifice. Unfortunately, that is not one of our priorities. We need to get out of the habit of simply giving out of the overflow. We need to give until it hurts. God gave tremendously to us (1 Chronicles 29:14, 16; John 3:16; James 1:17). God has been so good to us. We need to be good to Him! God gave us His Son so that we might have eternal life. Let us not turn aside from what He has provided. Obey the gospel and come to Jesus today.

In order to benefit from our assemblies, one must first keep in mind who is present. First, our brethren in Christ are present. They are people like you, who appreciate the presence and encouragement of other Christians. So take the time to visit with them before and after the

assembly. Second, visitors are frequently present. They draw conclusions about the congregation during their visit. So take the time to visit with them. Third, our Lord is present. Do we act as we would if He were bodily present?

You get out of the assembly what you put into it. Praying about what you are going to do and planning what you can do (such as welcoming and visiting) can make a truly edifying assembly. Come to serve, not to be served and you will be blessed in return. The more you attend and the more interest you show, the more you will grow. "How often do I have to come?" is indicative of grave spiritual immaturity. It displays a lack of true love for Christ and it shows that one is selfishly concerned with how little they can do to save themselves.