

# Called Out to be Called Up

## # How a Christ-follower Should Give

### 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

**Introduction:** Let's talk about one of our favorite topics - **MONEY**

Money is something you and I need to live. We must be able to pay our bills, and it requires money to be able to do that. Now how many in this room, just being honest, you're not trying to be spiritual. We're just going to be honest - how many in here would say, "I would like to have more money than I have."

If you sit down at a job interview and they say, 'We could pay you \$50,000 or \$60,000.' You would choose \$60,000, right? We'd all like to have more money.

Money is amoral. It's neither good nor bad. But your attitude toward money is not amoral. You've probably heard said, money is a wonderful servant, but it's a terrible master. And many people find themselves mastered by money.

Do any of you remember the character on Gilligan's Island, Thurston Howell, III. When he dreamed, they would hear him talking in his sleep saying, 'Money, money, money, money, money.'

He goes on a three-hour tour, and he brings like a million dollars. Obviously, he was an over-characterization of people's dependence on money. The Bible is filled with stories of people who became mastered by money, and it ruined their lives?

In the Book of Joshua, we read about a guy named Achan. When God destroyed the city, He said, "Everything in it belongs to the Lord. "Don't touch it!" But Achan took some things, and he hid them in his tent. He looked this way, and he looked this way, and didn't think anybody saw him. But he never looked up. God saw everything he did. And that greed and love of money ended up destroying his life and the lives of his entire family.

We read about Balaam, who was a prophet for profit, P-R-O-F-I-T. He had a love of money, and it ruined his life. We read about Elisha's servant, Gehazi, who had a love for money. And because of that love for money, he lied to Naaman, took some gifts that Elisha had refused to take from him after he was healed from

leprosy. He tried to lie, but Elisha knew, and Naaman's leprosy, that God had taken away, went to Gehazi because of his love for money.

In the early church, Ananias and Sapphira were two who loved money. They lied about their offering. They kept back some of the money for themselves. And they died, BAM, on the spot in the church.

Jesus said, ***"You can't serve two masters. You'll either love the one and hate the other, or cling to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and serve riches at the same time."***

Money, or the false god Mammon, vies for first place in our hearts, and if it does, it will pull you away from the Lord.

The solution to this potential pitfall is in giving. Giving is what keeps money in its proper place, so money is the servant and not the master. Giving is the answer to keep your heart from getting greedy.

In his book, Money, Possessions, and Eternity, Randy Alcorn writes, "We are assured by confident voices that the Old Testament practice of tithing doesn't apply to us, that the New Testament practice of liquidating assets and giving to the poor doesn't apply to us, that the biblical prohibitions of interest and the restriction of debt doesn't apply to us, that the commands not to hoard and stockpile assets don't apply to us and so on and so on. At some point, we must ask, "Then what in the world does apply to us?"

Let's find out as we open our bibles to 1 Corinthians 16. Paul goes from the most popular topic ever in church (Eternal life) in chapter 15 to perhaps the most unpopular topic in church (Giving). Paul says, 'Now that we've talked about the cross let's talk about the collection.'

If we're not careful, we might think chapter 16 has no connection to chapter 15. But that'd be a mistake. You see in chapter 15, Paul cataloged God's generosity to us. He gave us Christ, forgiveness, hope, purpose, meaning, and the hope of eternal life.

Now Paul says in ch16, "Considering the generosity God has shown to you, let's talk about how you can respond generously and gratefully."

Paul is not suggesting we need to repay God for what He's done for us. That's not possible. He's just talking about a grateful, joyful, faithful, worshipful response to the amazing, unmatched generosity of our Heavenly Father. In other words, if you really believe in the RESURRECTION of Jesus, then you should gladly give your money to the WORK of Jesus.

Look at what Paul says in V1-4. **1Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.**" (NIV) Let's PRAY

Before we get the meaning let me give you the context. Paul starts by saying, "Now concerning the collection for the Lord's people." What's he talking about?

The book of Acts tells us the church in Jerusalem continued to grow to 5,000, and maybe more like 10,000. On top of that, Christians were persecuted by the religious leaders and Roman officials of the day. We also know historically that a severe famine hit the land. So put that all together: money is tight, food is scarce, people are scared, poverty is high, and the future of the church is in danger. So, this collection Paul is referring to is money given by other churches outside of Jerusalem to help the church in Jerusalem.

But this text isn't just about how to take up a special offering in church. This text is about why and how all Christians everywhere in all times should give to God and the work of His church.

I want us to see 6 important values about Christian giving.

## **Considering God's Generosity to Us, Our Giving Should Be...**

- 1. An ACT OF WORSHIP.** Giving is to be an act of worship. Paul concluded, 1st Corinthians 15:58 and said, ***"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*** (NIV)

Most of the time when we think about giving in church, the word tithing comes to mind. The tithe means ten percent.

The form of tithing most often addressed in Scripture is **“tithing as covenant.”** This practice of tithing was specific to Israel as the covenant people of God. It was part of the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:21-32; Deuteronomy 14:22-29). Under the Covenant, God promised to materially bless Israel for obedience and, conversely, judge them (strip them of their prosperity) for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28 and Malachi 3:8-12).

In Christ, we live under a new covenant. Our lives are not governed by the written code but by the indwelling Holy Spirit who writes His “law” on our hearts (Galatians 5:18; Hebrews 8:7-13).

The Bible also describes a second kind of tithing that is **“tithing as legalism.”** In Jesus’ day, it was the religious leaders who practiced this perversion of Israel’s covenant tithe. Christ’s condemned this form of toxic giving:

***“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!”*** (Matthew 23:23-24)

In His relationship with Israel, God intended the tithe to be an avenue to blessing. The religious manipulators of Jesus’ day turned the blessing into burden. Instead of expressing faithfulness to God—and oneness of heart with God for ministry and the poor—the tithe became little more than a means to satisfy “religious obligations” which leads to pride (Luke 18:9-12).

In Scripture, **“tithing as worship”** was practiced prior to the establishment of “tithing as covenant” and the perversion of “tithing as legalism.” The practice of “tithing as worship” is “pre-Law.” It was established in Genesis 14:17-24 where Abram gives a tenth of his plunder to Melchizedek, King of Salem. Melchizedek, in turn, blesses Abram.

**“Tithing as worship,”** is an act by which we acknowledge that God is both our Sovereign Lord and the source of all blessing.

**“Tithing as worship”** also expresses our personal allegiance to God.

A third, and critical, element of **“tithing as worship”** is thanksgiving. “Tithing as worship” expresses overflowing gratitude toward God. It breaks free from guilt as the motivation for giving. Its ultimate focus is the condition of one’s heart—not the percentage of one’s income.

John H. Walton and Andrew E. Hill write, “How are we to show our gratitude to God other than by giving back a portion? If 10 percent was considered an acceptable portion by God as an expression of gratitude, then, why should we view it any differently today? We might consider 10 percent as a benchmark just as we consider 15 percent a benchmark for tipping. The extent of the customer’s gratitude and appreciation is demonstrated in the size of the tip. It would be considered the ultimate rudeness to leave no tip at all. So, it is to God if we return no portion to Him.” (*Old Testament Today*; Zondervan: 2004, 270-271)

So, giving is to be an act of worship.

## **Considering God's Generosity to Us, Our Giving Should Be...**

### **2. MOTIVATED BY LOVE.** (Not guilt, not legalism, not law...but LOVE)

God's love is how He offers us His saving grace. John 3:16 ***“For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*** (NIV)

Romans 5:8 ***“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*** (NIV)

Amy Carmichael said, 'You can give without loving, but no one can love without giving.' Loving is always connected to giving.

Because God unconditionally loves us, He unreservedly gave to us.

Love is our motivation. Not because we're ordered, or manipulated, or threatened to give. Love is why we give. But when you lose WHY you give, you will eventually lose the WILL to give.

That's why some Christians hate to hear about giving. If you don't have the WHY you won't have the WILL. God is far more concerned about what's in your heart when you give than what's in your hand. When your attitude is right the amount

will be right. When your attitude is wrong, the amount doesn't matter. Here's the good news, and bad news.

Good News: God's not after your money; He's after your heart!

Bad News: They're located in the same place!

What did Jesus say about this in Matthew 6:21? "***Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***" Your treasure (**what you give your life to**) and your heart (**what Christ gave His life for**) will always be in the same location. Over time, you will give most to what you love most.

It's on this foundational truth we can see where Paul is going in V1, '***Now about the collection for the Lord's people.***'

Whatever matters to God should matter to us. The motivation for giving is simple: Give because you love Jesus and because you love His people.

Why would these Corinthians be willing to give their money to help people they had never met? Because the love of God revealed in Christ had gripped their hearts. And their love for Jesus inspired them to love the church of Jesus.

We've been saved by the same grace and compelled by the same cross to give to the same mission.

Let me ask you: Do you love the Lord? Do you love the children and students we are teaching in this church? Do you love the people who come to us for the community with needs, problems, and difficult circumstances?

Do you love the Bean's in Slovakia, the Brinson's in the Arab world, the Carlocks in Gaza Israel, the Choi's in the Philippines, the Daniel's in Ecuador, the Lefler's in Russian, the McCulley's in Kenya, the Smith's in Tanzania, and the many other missionaries we support?

Do you love the work of Teen Challenge, the Pregnancy Care Center and Chi Alpha college ministry? **If you do, then your heart and your treasure will be together.** **When you love deeply you give generously.**

**Considering God's Generosity to Us, Our Giving Should Be...**

**3. A PERSONAL SACRIFICE.**

V2a, **"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income..."**. Stewardship is a discipleship issue. Every disciple is to love. Every disciple is to serve. Every disciple is to obey. And every disciple is to give.

Some people say, 'I can't afford to give money, so I'll give more time. I'll give more service.' You can't overcompensate in one area of spiritual discipline to make up for another. We are all called to give our time, talent, and treasure.

Salvation is free, but discipleship costs you your life. Jesus said, **"If you want to be my disciple deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me."** Discipleship is a lifestyle of giving your life away for God's glory. Giving must cost you something.

I LOVE THE STORY of King David in 2 Samuel 24. He's approaching a man named Araunah and he said, **"Why has my lord the king come to his servant?"**

**"To buy your threshing floor," David answered, "so I can build an altar to the Lord, that the plague on the people may be stopped."**

**22Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take whatever he wishes and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. 23Your Majesty, Araunah gives all this to the king." Araunah also said to him, "May the Lord your God accept you."**

**24But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So, David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them." (NIV)**

True giving personally costs you something. It requires some level of sacrifice. Just as no one can be saved for you no one can give for you. God's command to give isn't just for the wealthy, or the super spiritual. Giving is for everyone who has received. The amount to give is **different** for everyone, but the command to give is the **same** for everyone.

Children should give. (BGMC) Teenagers should give. (Speed the Light) College students, single adults, married couples, senior citizens who love Jesus are to give. Poor people, rich people, middle class people. **Giving is every believer's privilege so it should be every believer's practice.**

## Considering God's Generosity to Us, Our Giving Should Be...

### 4. MARKED BY CONSISTENCY.

V2 again, '*On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.*' What's the first day of the week? Sunday. How often does Sunday come around? Every week. Why Sunday? That's when the church gathered for worship.

So, with the assumption they are already regularly giving an offering, Paul is saying when you come to church on Sunday like you always do, and when you give your offering like you always do, put in a little bit more designated for the Jerusalem church. **(Missions & Vision) (NCAG PLUS 1)**

Paul is reinforcing the need for every disciple to give to Christ and His work consistently and intentionally. "Are you saying I must bring offering every week to the church?"

No. I don't think the intention was to be legalistic about it. I think Paul's main point of concern was to give consistently, not just when the worship moves you, or when you're in a generous mood. For some of you it is weekly, others monthly, whatever. Consistent giving helps develop in us an intentional Gospel-centered life.

Consistency supports and strengthens PRIORITY. We live in a culture that bombards us with millions of ways to use our money. "You need this. You deserve this. You gotta have this.' If we don't give intentionally and consistently to Christ and His work, it won't be a priority, because there will always be something clamoring for our money.

Some may be thinking, 'I'd love to give. I just don't have anything left to give.' What that means for most people is, 'After I take care of all my wants and needs, I don't have anything left to give.'

Please don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not saying you should never do or have nice things, **but what does your money say you love most?**

What the Bible teaches is that we need to decide that we're going to give to Christ and His church **first**, and then make decisions on what we can and can't afford



based on what we have left. If giving to God is a priority, we won't spend our money first and then give what's left.

## **Considering God's Generosity to Us, Our Giving Should Be...**

### **5. PROPORTIONATE TO ONE'S PROSPERITY.**

Here's the question some of you are asking: How much should we give? Glad you asked. V2, ***"On the first day of every week, each of one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your your income..."***

The great preacher Peter Marshall used to say, ***"Give according to your income, lest God make your income according to your giving."*** Paul is saying God gives you everything you have. And what you give should be based on what God gives to you. In other words, the more God gives you, the more you should give. You can be the widow with the two mites, or you may be a millionaire. It's not equal gifts, but it is equal sacrifice.

Every penny you have is what God has entrusted to you. Just like in the parable of the talents, to one the master gave 1 talent, to another 2 talents, and to another 5 talents. And when you give to God, what you are giving Him is a portion of what He has already generously given to you.

**ILLUS:** A man came to his pastor for counseling. He had felt convicted about not tithing anymore; he used to tithe faithfully when his weekly salary was only \$250. Now however he made \$1,000 a week and he confessed to the Pastor that he struggled with the idea of tithing on the larger salary, but that he had no problem tithing on \$250 a week. He asked the Pastor to pray for him, here is what the Pastor's prayer was: **"Father, please bring this man back to a \$250 a week salary so he can get back into your will and joyfully tithe again."**

You shouldn't be ordered to give, manipulated to give, threatened to give, or pressured to give. Give what the Spirit leads you to give and give cheerfully.

We should have the attitude that says: I'm giving to God. I'm giving to help fulfill the Lord's Great Commission.

## **Considering God's Generosity to Us, Our Giving Should Be...**

### **6. HANDLED RESPONSIBLY.**

V3-4, ***"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."***

The people we give to, the leaders of the church who use it for the ministry of Christ in the world, should be people of maturity, integrity, and responsibility. There's accountability on the giver and there's accountability on the leaders.

We have two people count our offering; one of them deposits it in the bank overnight deposit. Our bookkeeper records everyone's gifts and keeps a record.

If there is one area of our church that I think we are doing well it's that we are a giving church and we are a responsible church. And I believe that's why the Lord keeps blessing us.

**CONCLUSION:** Jesus tells this story in Luke 12:16-21; ***"The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 17He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'***

***18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. 19And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'***  
***20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'***

***21 "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God." (NIV)***

Did you hear that: This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.

Many people are enslaved by the love of money. Many marriages are struggling today because of financial difficulties. A little poem says it like this:

***Theirs was a beautiful marriage,  
Except for one feminine flaw;  
He was quick on the deposit.  
But she was faster on the draw.***

Let me close with a story in the life of Jesus from Mark 12 that is often overlooked. Verses 41-44 say that, ***“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.*”**

***Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you; this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”***

### **I. Notice where Jesus SITS.**

Verse 41 says, "And Jesus sat over against the treasury..." It may come as a surprise that Jesus is interested in what we give. The word, collection, literally means **“to say something.”**

Every time you and I give our offerings we are saying something regarding where our heart is and where we put our trust. Giving is not a money issue, it's a trust issue.

### **II. Notice who Jesus SEES.**

Verse 41 says, "He beholds how the people cast money into the treasury." Jesus sees the people. One of the most beautiful statements made about Jesus to me in all the Bible is when the Bible says, ***“And the common people heard Him gladly.”***

Here is a widow. Verse 42, "And there came a certain poor widow (no name given)." That means her husband has died. She's trying to make it alone.

The word, poor, means that the chances are strong that this woman went hungry very often. Yet, she is coming to give a gift, and Jesus sees her.

Jesus sees the rich give their much, but He also sees this widow give her little.

### **III. Notice what Jesus SAYS.**

Jesus compliments her gift. ***"This poor widow has cast more in than all they which cast into the treasury."*** Jesus said they gave of their abundance. She gave of her want and gave all that she had. It cost her something.

What she did was so beautiful and what Jesus says about it is so meaningful that it has been memorialized in the pages of God's Word.

We're saved by grace. We're forgiven by grace. The Bible says we're strengthened by grace. We're set free from problems and sins by grace. All the talents you have were given to you. They were a gift of grace. You're transformed by grace. And we grow by grace. By grace we have been saved through faith.

**If you want to go from being broke to being blessed, then be a grace giver.**

1 Timothy 6 says: *"Tell people to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in need, always being ready to share whatever God has given them. By doing this they'll be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven. It is the only safe investment for eternity, and they will be living a fruitful Christian life down here as well."*

Let me give you some Heart Work for Homework: In your giving to God...

**Check your MOTIVES.** Do you give because you love Christ and His church? Do you love this church and the work Jesus is doing in us or through us? What's your motive for giving. Are you giving as an act of worship? Remember...if you lose why you give, you'll lose your will to give.

**Analyze your AMOUNT.** Why do you give the amount you give? Is what you give in line with your income?

**Evaluate your HABITS.** Are you thinking and planning ahead for your giving? Are you making sure Jesus and His mission in the world are first and not last? What's your habit in giving? Does it reflect an attitude of joy and cheerfulness?

I want you to know that if you sold all you have and gave it to the church, it would not and could not buy one single drop of Jesus' blood shed for your salvation. We are not saved by what we give to God, but by what He gave on that

cross...Himself. That is why we give: because He gave to us. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. **Real wealth is having what money can't buy and what death can't take away.**