

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

My Contribution On The First Day Of The Week

Scenario:

A lesson is preached on the subject matter of giving to the Lord on the first day of the week. The texts used in the sermon were I Corinthians 16:1-4 and II Corinthians 8:1-9:13. It was stated in that sermon that there has to be a reason for a collection to be taken on the first day of the week. After the lesson is preached, brethren are talking about the points that were made.

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

A brother in the congregation says this to multiple members: "I am thankful for that lesson. I have always understood that when I give I am giving to the Lord as I have purposed in my heart. However, I have not thought so much about the fact that when I give there is to be a purpose for what is to be done with the funds given. I am finding it interesting that this is a two-fold subject. Giving to God is the first. Also, that there is something that needs to exist for those funds to be used for as the second part. Right now, we don't have needy saints, widows indeed, or an elder that needs support. All we have is an evangelist. I am just wondering, should I be giving more if I think the preacher ought to be getting more support?"

A Later Statement Is Made:

A brother responds: "As you stated, the first point is that you are giving to God. What is done after that is the work of the congregation, not the motivation for giving. I am just glad we have something to do as a congregation with the funds that we give or else we would be a congregation that doesn't have authority to take a collection. Then, we would be considered spiritually dead, because we would not be doing any authorized works."

For Discussion: What do you see in those statements?

- Teaching on all of the Scriptures is necessary (**Acts 20:17-27**).
- As I structure my thoughts on the things in this discernment class, I have to be sure to remind us of something that all Christians know. How I am going to approach some of the points here will reference Old Law principles. Thus, let me remind that no one is under the Law of Moses today (**Romans 7:1-6**, **Ephesians 2:11-17**, **Colossians 2:4-16**, and **Hebrews 9:15-10:22**).
- Today, we are under the "Law of Christ" (**Galatians 6:2**) a.k.a. "the perfect law of liberty" (**James 1:25** and **James 2:10-12**).
- While the Law changed from the garden, to the forefathers, to the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms to John and then the Law of Christ; God hasn't changed (**Malachi 3:6** and **Hebrews 13:8**).

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- We learn about God and have His mindset revealed to us through the entirety of the Scriptures (**Romans 15:4, I Corinthians 2:1-16, I Corinthians 10:1-12, and II Timothy 3:15-17**).
- We have to be VERY CAUTIOUS how we handle the Scriptures (**II Timothy 2:14-18 and II Peter 3:15-17**). If we are going to carry something over from the time before the Law of Moses or during, we have to be sure it applies today through the New Testament Scriptures. Changes from the law began when John came teaching (**Matthew 11:13 and Luke 16:16**). Right from the beginning of Jesus' teaching, He started changing things that were written of old (**Matthew 5:21-48**).
- Some of the Scriptures we will look at in these notes are Scriptures about using the Lord's money, in the New Testament, that are actually rooted in the Law of Moses. For example, Paul taught about supporting evangelists and elders by using principles from the Law of Moses (**I Corinthians 9:8-14 and I Timothy 5:17-18**; cf. **Deuteronomy 25:4, Numbers 5:9-10, and Deuteronomy 18:1-5**). Therefore, we will carefully consider the PRINCIPLES of those Old Law contexts.
- Giving unto the Lord is a subject matter that is shown under the Law of Moses. There were very strict guidelines under the Law of Moses (i.e. **Leviticus 27:1-34, Numbers 18:25-32, Deuteronomy 14:22-29, and II Chronicles 31:1-6**).
- In Christ, giving is a matter of as prospered (**I Corinthians 16:2**) and bountifully... as he purposeth in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity (**II Corinthians 9:6-7**). This was different than under the Law wherein it was required to "tithe a tenth" (**Leviticus 27:32**).
- There is a prevalent principle provided in the Scriptures. That principle is God/ His kingdom first in all things (**Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Matthew 6:19-34, Matthew 12:36-38, John 6:1-27, II Corinthians 5:14-15, and Colossians 3:1-4**), which included the giving of earthly gains to Him in the principle of "firstfruits" (**Exodus 23:16-19, Leviticus 2:12-16, Deuteronomy 26:10, Nehemiah 10:35-39, Proverbs 3:9, Ezekiel 20:40, and Ezekiel 44:30**). Such was even true of the firstborn under the Law of Moses (**Exodus 13:1-2**). That later changed to the Levites (**Numbers 3:11-13; 3:41 and Numbers 8:15-18**). Then, after coming out of Babylon, they reverted back (**Nehemiah 10:36**).

*****Now to the statements made*****

- The discussion that comes in this scenario is great. To understand that giving is to God is simple. Where most err is in what to do with the funds collected. There is a clear distinction in the New Testament that once money is purposed, before it is even actually given, that those funds are no longer the funds of the giver. Those funds then belong to the Lord (**Acts 4:32-5:11**).
- As we study through the New Testament we find that congregations, in a collective manner, did or were authorized to financially fund truly needy saints (**Romans 15:25-27, I Corinthians 16:1-4, and II Corinthians 8:1-9:13**), faithful men that are evangelists (**I Corinthians 9:1-14, II Corinthians 11:8, and Philippians 4:10-18**), qualified widows indeed (**I Timothy 5:3-16**), and qualified (**I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9**) elders (**I Timothy 5:17-18**).

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- Now to authorized purposes of the funds collected. There is no authority for a congregation to take a collection just for the purpose of taking a collection. If you will go back and read what does apply to a congregation that was contextually supporting Paul, he said that their aid was fruit that abounded to their account (**Philippians 4:17**). Sadly, if a congregation has no one to support financially what does that make them (the following is a reference in principle only; the application is to the individual - **James 2:14-26**)? A congregation that just exists, and that's it, is spiritually DEAD (**Revelation 3:1**).
- For more thought on this... Can a congregation exist, for a period of time, without nothing to support? Yes, Corinth did. How long though? How long can a tree produce no fruit (**Luke 13:6-9**)? Is the congregation working towards an eldership? How about evangelists growing up and moving to preach somewhere? Having a home grown teacher is the idea (**Matthew 13:53-58**). You can't put a young person in the work just to have someone to support either. Nor can two men become elders for the same reason. A congregation could be doing the work of assembling, comfort/edification (**Ephesians 4:16, I Thessalonians 5:11-14, and Hebrews 10:22-25**) without taking a collection. Again though, for how long? How long until they cease to exist even in name only? If a congregation is in this state, shouldn't they seek to do something as quick as possible? What about a move? Something?? What's the future look like, if the future comes (**James 4:13-16**), in such a state of existence?
- Years ago I was faced with a dilemma personally. In principle, it is similar to one a member of a congregation might face with some differences. Read this article and think about it: <https://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol16/wotbulletin07102016.html>
- If a congregation is using **I Corinthians 16:1-4** for authority to take up a collection on the first day of the week, don't they have to have a Scriptural reason to do so? Corinth did. There was a collection because there was a need! The church has zero authority to receive funds to start a savings account.
- This man concludes that all they have is an evangelist. Then you have an authorized purpose to take a collection. The same would be true if all you had was a widow indeed, needy saints, or qualified elders. Give the funds collected to that authorized person(s). If there are multiple authorized means in which to use the funds collected on the first day of the week, be good stewards of the Lord's money (ex. **Acts 2:45** and **Acts 4:35**).
- In Corinth, since we use **I Corinthians 16:1-4**, we need to understand that the need they supported was not even a local one. The need was needy saints in Jerusalem. Each case would have to be carefully considered. Outside of the needy saints, we can only find authority (again; Scriptures above) for a congregation to directly support evangelists that are not local. That's what we can prove right and thus should hold to (**I Thessalonians 5:21**). When giving is stressed, with no purpose behind it, churches end up either forming savings accounts or spending the Lord's money in unauthorized manners.
- Then the question is raised about the amount given based upon the thinking the evangelist needs more money. The brother responding is 100% correct as much of the notes above already address. You give to God! Aside from **Acts 5:1-4**; consider **Malachi 3:7-10**. As we've already read, the giving of Old would go to the

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Levites, the widows, the fatherless, and the strangers among the children of Israel (**Deuteronomy 26:12-13**). Yet, God viewed their giving, regardless of purpose, as unto Him.

- On one more point regarding the support of evangelists (since this scenario focuses on such). Sometimes people are quick to draw out that Paul worked a secular job using **Acts 18:1-4**. With that, they state or infer that evangelists should be “paid less” and could do secular work for money. It is true that Paul worked secular work at times. You can see it beyond that one example most use too (**Acts 20:34, I Corinthians 4:11-12, II Thessalonians 3:8-9**, etc.). I have/will strongly argue that no man today could do what Paul did. Consider, Paul did not have to spend time studying (**Matthew 10:16-20** and **Galatians 1:10-12**) to be instant in season and out (**II Timothy 4:2**). Paul had direct guidance in where to go and what to say when he got there (**Acts 16:1-10** and **I Corinthians 2:1-13**). Regarding marriage. Paul was a single man (**I Corinthians 7**). Could you apply his need for support the same as a married man (**I Timothy 5:8**)? Also, what does REALLY doing the work/life of an evangelist (**I Timothy 4:13-16**) do to the mind of those teaching (**Psalms 119:136, Jeremiah 13:17, and Romans 9:1-3**)? How would that affect him in a secular job? How can a man with divided time be “instant” (**II Timothy 4:2**)? How would that interfere with a secular job? Think about the principle of a servant not [purloining] embezzling here too (**Titus 2:9-10**). If a man dedicates his whole life to the Gospel and works a secular job, who is he going to short? Will his family (if married) get less time? Will his secular job get less time? Will his studies, teaching, meditation in the Gospel, etc. get less time? Who/what gets the short end of his time? Reread **I Corinthians 9:1-14** and think on why it was written. Think about how Paul labored at times in Corinth, but got support from elsewhere (**II Corinthians 11:8**). What did he say about that decision (**II Corinthians 12:12-13**)?
- This scenario has no definite errors in it. It is a great example of brethren learning and applying what they’ve learned. It is great when a lesson causes discussions amongst the hearers (**Luke 4:31-37** and **Luke 24:13-35**).
- Since this discussion centered around the collection on the first day of the week and the collective work, as the local church, done with those funds; nothing was said about individual responsibilities. Even though we give upon the first day of the week, that doesn’t mean that’s the only work we have as Christians with our funds to do. There are cases wherein individual responsibilities apply (i.e. **Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 10:25-37, Acts 11:27-30, Romans 12:13, Romans 13:6-7, Philemon 1:21-22, I Timothy 5:3-16, I Timothy 6:17-18, I Peter 4:9, and I John 3:14-18**).