

Heart of Worship, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 7: Giving as an Act of Worship

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrinal matter in this lesson is the nature and pattern of Christian giving as an act of worship. Paul's brief instruction in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 establishes a clear pattern: giving tied to the first day of every week, personal to each believer, planned and laid aside in advance, and proportionate to how God has prospered each one. The wider context in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 supplies the heart of it: giving that is decided beforehand, free, and cheerful, because God loves a cheerful giver. Help your class see that the offering is not a financial interruption in worship but a genuine act of worship in its own right.

Be prepared to handle two errors clearly. The first turns giving into the Old Covenant tithe, bound upon Christians as a fixed law to be calculated and discharged. The New Testament does not command a tithe of believers; it calls for proportionate, purposed, cheerful giving as we have prospered, which for many will mean far more than a tenth and is governed by love rather than law. The second error is the prosperity gospel, which treats giving as an investment scheme by which we give in order to get rich. Scripture promises that God will supply the giver, but it never makes giving a transaction for personal wealth. Present both corrections positively: New Covenant giving is free, glad, and trusting, neither a tax nor a bargain.

Keep the lesson aimed at the heart, because money reveals the heart like little else. Jesus tied our treasure to our heart, and Paul tied giving to cheerfulness and trust. The aim is not to pressure your students into larger gifts but to free them to give as worship, with planning, proportion, and joy, as an expression of trust in God's provision and love for his work and people. Handle the subject with grace, never with manipulation, and let the goal be glad-hearted givers rather than reluctant ones.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul instructs that "on the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside" (v. 2). What does it tell us that giving was tied to the first day of the week, the same day the church gathered to worship, and how does that frame giving as part of worship rather than mere financial business?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the timing. Paul ties giving to the first day of every week, the very day the church gathered to break bread and worship. Giving was not scheduled as a separate business meeting but woven into the rhythm of the assembly's worship.

Draw the implication. Because giving belongs to the worship of the first day, it is itself an act of worship, not a mere collection of funds. The offering stands alongside the songs, the prayers, and the Supper as part of what the gathered church does before God.

Apply it. This reframes the moment when the plate is passed. It is not an intrusion into worship but a part of it, an offering brought to God by his people. Encourage the class to receive that moment as worship rather than as bookkeeping.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Giving tied to the first day of the week, the day of worship (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- The offering as an act of worship, not mere financial business.
- Giving woven into the rhythm of the church's assembly.
- The collection standing alongside song, prayer, and the Supper.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that giving was tied to the day of worship?
- How does seeing the offering as worship change that moment?
- Why do we so easily treat giving as bookkeeping rather than praise?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul says "each of you" is to give, making the offering personal and individual, not something a few handle for the rest. How do you think of your own giving, as a personal act of worship or as someone else's responsibility, and what would it mean to own it as yours before God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Stress the word "each." Paul makes giving personal and individual. It is not handled by a few wealthy members on behalf of the rest; every believer participates, according to what God has given.

Show why this matters. Giving is an act of worship, and worship cannot be outsourced. Just as no one can sing or pray or commune for me, no one can give my offering for me. Each believer brings his own gift to God.

Apply it gently. Encourage students to own their giving as a personal act of worship before God, not as an obligation that belongs to others or to the institution. Owning it is the first step toward giving with intention and joy.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Giving as personal and individual to each believer (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- Worship, including giving, that cannot be outsourced to others.
- Every member's participation in the offering.
- Owning one's giving as worship before God.

Discussion Prompts

- Do you think of your giving as personally yours before God?
- Why can no one give your offering for you?
- What would it mean to own your giving as an act of worship?

Question 3

Student Question:

The believers were to “put something aside and store it up” in advance (v. 2), making giving deliberate and planned rather than spontaneous or left over. Why does God call for purposed, intentional giving, and how does planning shape the heart of the giver?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Focus on the deliberateness. Paul says to put something aside and store it up, which means deciding in advance and setting it apart. Giving in the early church was planned, not impulsive or left to whatever remained in the pocket.

Show how planning shapes the heart. When we decide beforehand what to give, giving becomes a considered act of worship rather than a reaction to pressure or mood. Purposed giving engages the will and the heart, and it guards against both stinginess and showy impulse.

Connect to 2 Corinthians 9:7, where each gives as he has decided in his heart. Decided, purposed giving is exactly what God calls for. Encourage students to bring planning and intention to their giving as an expression of seriousness before God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Purposed, planned giving set aside in advance (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- Giving as a decided act of the heart (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- Planning that engages the will and guards against impulse.
- Intentionality as a mark of worshipful giving.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God call for purposed rather than impulsive giving?
- How does planning your giving shape your heart?

- What is the difference between deciding to give and giving on impulse?

Question 4

Student Question:

Planned giving requires deciding in advance what to set aside, rather than giving from whatever happens to remain. Is your giving purposed and first, or is it an afterthought from what is left? What would it look like for you to plan your giving deliberately, as Paul directs?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Make it personal. The text presses the difference between giving that is first and planned and giving that is an afterthought from what happens to be left. Many give from the leftovers, and the leftovers are usually thin.

Invite honest reflection. Ask students whether their giving is decided first, off the top of what God provides, or last, after every other expense and want has been met. The order reveals the priority.

Offer a concrete step. Encourage each person to plan their giving deliberately: to decide an amount or proportion in advance, to set it aside first, and to bring it as a purposed offering. This simple shift can transform giving from afterthought to worship.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The difference between first, planned giving and leftover giving.
- Giving off the top as a sign of priority and trust.
- The order of our giving as a window into our hearts.
- Deliberate planning as an act of worshipful intention.

Discussion Prompts

- Is your giving first and planned, or an afterthought from what is left?
- What does the order of your giving reveal about your priorities?
- What would purposed, planned giving look like for you?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul says each is to give “as he may prosper” (v. 2), making the gift proportionate to what God has provided. How does proportionate giving differ from a flat amount or a fixed rule, and what does giving in proportion to our blessing express about our relationship to God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Explain proportion. Paul says to give as one may prosper, in proportion to what God has provided. This is not a flat fee or a single fixed amount for everyone, but a gift that rises and falls with God's blessing on each person.

Show what proportion expresses. Giving in proportion to our prosperity acknowledges that all we have comes from God and that our giving should reflect his generosity to us. The one to whom much is given has much to offer back.

Contrast with mere rule-keeping. A flat rule can be discharged and forgotten; proportionate giving keeps us continually mindful of God as the source of all we have. It ties our offering to our gratitude and our trust.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Proportionate giving, as God has prospered each one (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- All our resources as gifts from God to be shared.
- Giving that reflects God's generosity to us.
- Proportion keeping us mindful of God as the source of all.

Discussion Prompts

- How does proportionate giving differ from a flat amount or rule?
- What does giving in proportion to our blessing express?
- How does proportion keep us mindful of God as our provider?

Question 6

Student Question:

Giving "as he may prosper" means the more God provides, the more we have to offer him. As God has blessed you, has your giving grown in proportion, or has your standard of living simply risen instead? Where might God be calling you to give more freely out of what he has provided?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Press the implication of proportion personally. If we give as God prospers, then as his provision grows, our giving should grow with it. Yet often our giving stays flat while our standard of living quietly rises to absorb every increase.

Help students examine this honestly. Increased income tends to raise our wants rather than our offerings. The question is whether God's added blessing has led to added generosity or merely to added comfort.

Encourage a concrete response. Ask each person to consider whether God may be calling them to give more freely out of what he has provided, and to take one step toward letting their giving grow with their blessing rather than lagging behind it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Giving meant to grow as God's provision grows.
- The temptation to absorb increase into comfort rather than generosity.
- Generosity as a response to God's continued blessing.
- Examining whether our giving has kept pace with our prosperity.

Discussion Prompts

- Has your giving grown as God has blessed you, or stayed flat?
- How does rising comfort quietly crowd out increased generosity?
- Where might God be calling you to give more freely?

Question 7

Student Question:

In the wider context of his teaching on this collection, Paul says, "God loves a cheerful giver," and that each should give as he has decided in his heart, "not reluctantly or under compulsion" (2 Corinthians 9:7). What does this reveal about the kind of heart God seeks in our giving, and why does the attitude matter as much as the amount?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Bring in the heart of giving from 2 Corinthians 9:7. God loves a cheerful giver, and each is to give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion. The attitude is central, not incidental.

Explain why the heart matters so much. God is not a beggar in need of funds; he owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He seeks the worship of glad, willing hearts. A gift squeezed out grudgingly is not the worship he desires, however large.

Show the freedom in this. Because God seeks cheerfulness, giving is not about meeting a quota under pressure but about the joyful overflow of a grateful heart. The amount matters, but the gladness behind it matters even more.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's love for the cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- Giving from a decided heart, not under compulsion.
- The attitude of the giver as central to worshipful giving.
- Gladness as the heart God seeks in our offerings.

Discussion Prompts

- What kind of heart does God seek in our giving?

- Why does the attitude matter as much as the amount?
- How is cheerful giving a freedom rather than a burden?

Question 8

Student Question:

God loves a cheerful giver, yet much of our giving can be reluctant or grudging. When you give, is it with gladness or with quiet resistance? What fears or attachments make cheerful giving hard for you, and how might trusting God's provision free you to give with joy?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Make this personal and gentle. Much of our giving can be reluctant, given with quiet resistance even when the hand is open. This question invites honest self-examination about the gladness, or lack of it, behind our gifts.

Name the obstacles. Fear of not having enough, attachment to possessions, distrust of God's provision, all make cheerful giving hard. Cheerfulness is choked not by poverty but by a heart that does not fully trust God.

Point to the cure. Cheerful giving grows from trust: trust that God owns it all, that he will provide, that what we give to him is not lost. Encourage students to bring their fears to God and to let trust open the way to joy in giving.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The reluctance that often shadows our giving.
- Fear and attachment as obstacles to cheerful giving.
- Trust in God's provision as the root of joyful generosity.
- Cheerfulness choked by distrust rather than by poverty.

Discussion Prompts

- Is your giving marked by gladness or by quiet resistance?
- What fears or attachments make cheerful giving hard for you?
- How might trusting God's provision free you to give with joy?

Question 9

Student Question:

The New Testament presents the giving of the church as first-day-of-the-week worship, purposed, cheerful, and proportionate to our prosperity (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7). It is not the Old Covenant tithe bound upon Christians as law, and it is not a prosperity-gospel transaction in which we give to get rich in return. How does this New Covenant pattern of giving

guard us on both sides, against treating giving as a legal tax to be calculated and discharged, and against treating it as a bargain with God for material reward? How does it instead set giving free as a glad and trusting act of worship?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal heart of the lesson, so handle it with clarity and grace. The New Testament pattern of giving has a definite shape: it is first-day-of-the-week worship, personal, purposed, proportionate to our prosperity, and cheerful, given from a heart that has decided freely before God (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7). Lead with this positive pattern before addressing the errors.

Address the first error, legalism, plainly but positively. Some treat Christian giving as the Old Covenant tithe, a fixed ten percent bound upon believers as law, to be calculated and discharged like a tax. But the New Testament does not bind the tithe upon the church; it calls for proportionate, purposed, cheerful giving governed by love. For many this will mean far more than a tenth, but the point is that giving is freed from law and placed under grace and love. Guard your class from reducing worship to a calculation.

Address the second error, the prosperity gospel, just as clearly. Some treat giving as an investment scheme, a way to make God repay them with material wealth. Scripture does promise that God will supply the giver and make grace abound (2 Corinthians 9:8), but it never makes giving a bargain for personal riches. Giving is worship offered to God and love poured out for his work and people, not a transaction designed to enrich the giver.

Bring both corrections together as freedom. New Covenant giving is neither a tax to be paid nor a bargain to be struck. It is a glad, trusting act of worship, planned and proportionate, offered cheerfully by a heart that knows everything already belongs to God. Help your class feel how this frees giving from both dread and greed, and turns it into joy.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- New Covenant giving: first-day, personal, purposed, proportionate, and cheerful (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7).
- Giving freed from the Old Covenant tithe bound as law.
- Proportionate, love-governed giving rather than a calculated tax.
- Giving is not a prosperity-gospel transaction for personal wealth.
- God supplies the giver, but giving is worship, not a bargain (2 Corinthians 9:8).
- Giving set free as a glad, trusting act of worship.

Discussion Prompts

- How does New Covenant giving differ from the Old Covenant tithe?
- Why is giving not a bargain with God for material reward?
- How does this pattern free giving from both legalism and greed?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over Paul's instruction: regular, personal, planned, proportionate, and cheerful giving as an act of worship. Name one specific way the Lord is calling you to grow as a giver, and one concrete change you will make so that your giving becomes a glad offering of worship rather than a grudging routine.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Gather the marks of worshipful giving: regular, personal, planned, proportionate, and cheerful. Ask students which of these is most lacking in their own giving, and where Christ is calling them to grow.

Press for one concrete step. For some it is to begin planning their giving; for others, to give first rather than from leftovers; for others, to let giving grow with their blessing; for others, to deal with the fear that steals their joy.

End by lifting their eyes beyond money to the Giver. God gave his own Son; our giving is a small echo of his great generosity. Encourage the class to give as worship, with glad and trusting hearts, knowing that what they offer to God is never lost but laid up where their treasure and their heart can safely rest.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The marks of worshipful giving drawn together.
- The call to grow as a glad and purposeful giver.
- God's generosity in Christ as the model and motive for our giving.
- Treasure laid up with God as the security of the giver.

Discussion Prompts

- Which mark of worshipful giving is most lacking in your giving?
- What one change will you make so giving becomes glad worship?
- How does God's generosity in Christ reshape the way you give?