

Heart of Worship

Lesson 7: Giving as an Act of Worship -- 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

It comes around every week, quietly, between the songs and the sermon: a plate or a basket passed down the row, and a moment that most of us hardly think about. We reach for an envelope or we do not, we drop something in or we let it pass, and the service moves on. It can feel like the least spiritual moment in the assembly, a bit of necessary bookkeeping to keep the lights on. But Paul did not think of it that way, and neither did the early church. To them, the giving of the saints on the first day of the week was an act of worship, as deliberate and as holy as the songs and the prayers.

Paul mentions it almost in passing, at the end of his great letter to the Corinthians, but the instruction is precise. “Now concerning the collection for the saints,” he writes, “as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper.” Four things stand out, and we will return to them. The giving was regular, tied to the first day of every week. It was personal, each of you. It was deliberate, set aside and stored up in advance. And it was proportionate, as he may prosper, according to what God had given.

This was not a fundraising gimmick or an emergency appeal. It was the settled practice of the churches, the same in Galatia as in Corinth, woven into the rhythm of their worship. When the saints gathered on the first day of the week to break bread and pray and sing, they also gave, purposefully and gladly, out of what God had provided. Their giving was not a tax extracted from them but an offering brought to God, a tangible way of saying that everything they had was his, and that his work and his people mattered more than their own comfort.

Few areas of the Christian life expose the heart as quickly as money. Jesus said more about it than almost anything else, because where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. This lesson invites us to lift the offering out of the realm of grudging routine and see it for what God means it to be: an act of worship, an exercise of trust, and a weekly opportunity to lay our resources on the altar with glad and willing hearts. Read Paul’s brief instruction, and let it reframe the moment when the plate comes down your row.

Group Discussion: For many people, the offering can feel like the least worshipful moment of the assembly, a practical necessity rather than an act of praise. Why do you think giving is so easily reduced to routine or even resented, and what would change if a congregation truly saw its giving as worship offered to God?

Personal Reflection: Jesus said that where our treasure is, our heart will be also. Think honestly about your own giving. Is it planned and purposeful, or whatever happens to be left over? Is it joyful or grudging? What does your pattern of giving reveal about where your heart and your trust actually rest?

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?

6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: 2 Corinthians 9:6–8, God loves a cheerful giver and is able to make grace abound; 2 Corinthians 8:1–5, the Macedonians who gave beyond their means and first gave themselves to the Lord; Matthew 6:19–21, treasure in heaven and the heart that follows it; Mark 12:41–44, the widow who gave out of her poverty all she had; Acts 20:35, it is more blessed to give than to receive.