



The Church Collection (1 Cor. 16:1-4)

Paul begins a new topic in verse 16 and it is final major teaching in the letter. Following this instruction on giving, he moves to his travel plans, and closes with some final instructions to the church.

I. Giving Should be Regular

Paul gives three important lessons about financial giving in the church. First, he says that **Giving Should be Regular**. In **verse 2** we find the instruction, ***“On the first day of every week . . .”*** Christian giving should be regular and collected on the first day of every week. This particular offering was for the needs of the poor Christians in Jerusalem. 2 Cor. 8-9; Romans 15:25-27; and Acts 24:17 also speak of giving to these poor saints.

In the first century and even in many parts of the world today it is typical to be paid daily. This was necessary before refrigeration and easy access to banking. The emphasis is not so much that giving is to be done every Lord’s Day, but that the gifts are collected on the Lord’s Day and that Christians should give regularly.

If you are paid monthly, God probably does not expect you to break up your gift into four or five parts so that you can give an equal amount each week. The point is that you should give regularly as you are paid.

To give regularly demands planning so Paul says, ***“each of you is to put something aside and store it up...”*** In a poor church where people were paid daily, it took planning and discipline to hold back something each day so that they could give. Regular giving demands preparation. And first, is the preparation of self. In 2 Corinthians 8:5 Paul writes about the giving of the Macedonians and says that they gave themselves first to the Lord.



We also learn in this passage that regular giving should be saved and collected by the church. While it is perfectly acceptable to give to worthy organisations the primary obligation of Christians is to give to the church and those in need. The church is God’s arm of evangelism and benevolence in the world and the local church is where we become a part of that arm. The church allows our regular giving to be combined with others into something that can make a difference in our community and around the world.

1. Why was the collection to made on the first day of the week?

2. Why does giving require planning?

II. Giving Should be Proportional

Second Paul writes that Giving Should be Proportional. In **verse 2** we learn that a man's giving is to be "*as he may prosper . . .*" God does not expect anyone to give beyond what they are able to give. God expects the person who makes a thousand dollars a week to give more than the man who makes five hundred. And he expects the man who makes five hundred to give more than the man who makes two hundred and fifty.

3. What does Mark 12:41-44 teach concerning the gift of a poor widow?

We can expend much time and energy trying to determine just how much to give. We can try to bind a percentage on to people, but to do so is to be unfaithful to God's Word. Giving should not be viewed as a duty so much as it is a privilege. We are able to worship God in our giving. People often speak of the "*tithe*" though this word is not used in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek. Jacob promised to give God a tenth of his possessions if God would protect and prosper him. In the law of Moses a tithe was required, but there were other required offerings as well. It has been estimated that approximately 23% of the income of the Jews was to be given in some fashion as an offering. However, we cannot take these Old Testament examples to bind a percentage of giving on Christians today. Ancient Judaism was a national religion so some of these gifts were really a governmental taxation. It has often been suggested that since our blessings are so much greater than those who lived in the Old Testament our giving should be greater and 10% is a minimum with which to start. Perhaps God does not call on Christians to give a specific percentage because he wants us to give freely, lovingly, and generously. We are to decide within our hearts what to give.



4. How would you advise another Christian who asked you what percentage of their income was appropriate to give as an offering to the Lord?

III. Giving Should be Protected

Third, Giving Should be Protected. The gifts to be collected in Corinth were going to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Paul had also requested money from the churches of Galatia as well as from those in Macedonia and Achaia. In the first century Jerusalem was a very poor city. It was overpopulated, subject to famine, and Christians were persecuted for their faith. Many had lost their homes and possessions and because of their faith they were incapable of gaining a job.

The giving that Paul requires has a beneficial purpose that could easily be understood by all. Of course the gift itself would have pleased and honoured God, but these funds were used to help meet the legitimate needs of others. One of the primary purposes of New Testament giving is benevolence.

5. What is the teaching of Galatians 6:10?

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that we are to care for anyone we can, even though the call to help fellow Christians is even greater. Benevolent aid was taught and practiced by Jesus and by the early church. One is struck in Acts 2 by the desire of the early church to care for one another. They shared with one another. They sold their possessions so that they might share with one another.

The gift the Corinthians were giving was cross cultural as Gentile Christians in Corinth assist Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. The oft heard phrase: “*Charity begins at home*” doesn’t fit well with the lifestyle of Jesus or the example of New Testament giving. In fact, the New Testament records giving directed towards benevolence, evangelism, and the support of Christian workers.

Our primary purpose in giving is not to make ourselves comfortable, but to praise and honour a living God who desires the world to hear His gospel. Our energies and our giving should be focused on this goal.

Giving should also be protected in its’ administration. Handling and distributing the Lord’s money is serious business. Those who give to the church can and should expect that these gifts will be used wisely and carefully. In **verse 3** Paul instructs the Corinthians to appoint men to handle the money. Entrust the gifts to those who are honest and trustworthy and wise. This was especially important in a age when they could not electronically transfer funds or write a check. The money was gold and silver coins and would have to be physically transported from one place to another.

6. From your observation, how do most churches use the money they collect?

7. What are the main lessons we learn about giving and the use of money collected?