

# What Does God Want Us to Put into the Offering Plate?

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II Corinthians 8:1-15

**1 Are you confused on Sundays when the offering plate is passed, about what to put into it? What does God expect you to put in it? What amount would give you the satisfaction of knowing you are pleasing God?**

**Let me give you some Bible principles to help you decide.**

**First let's build these principles around our text for today from Second Corinthians, chapter 8, verses 1 through 15. 2**

**And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in**

this service to the saints. became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.<sup>1 3</sup>

And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us — see that you also excel in this grace of giving.<sup>2 4</sup>

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.<sup>3 5</sup>

And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to

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<sup>1</sup> II Corinthians 8:1-4.

<sup>2</sup> II Corinthians 8:5-7.

<sup>3</sup> II Corinthians 8:8-9.

give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.<sup>4</sup> <sup>6</sup>

Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: “He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little.”<sup>5</sup> <sup>7</sup>

**The first principle is . . .**

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<sup>4</sup> II Corinthians 8:10-12.

<sup>5</sup> II Corinthians 8:13-15.

# I. God Owns Everything

God owns everything. <sup>8</sup>

God is the Almighty Creator. He owns everything by right of creation! <sup>9</sup>

God said . . . **the whole earth is mine . . .** <sup>6</sup> <sub>10</sub> Again, **The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it . . .** <sup>7</sup> <sub>11</sub>

In talking to the Lord, Moses said, **Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.** <sup>8</sup> <sub>12</sub>

In Psalm, chapter 50, verse 10, it says, . . . **for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.** So the question becomes, “If He owns all that cattle, why doesn't He sell a few because I need the money!” <sub>13</sub>

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 19:5.

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 24:1.

<sup>8</sup> I Chronicles 29:14.

The answer is, God has promised to provide all of your needs. Matthew, chapter 6, verse 33, says, **Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** <sup>14</sup>

He demonstrated this a couple of times. The Lord walked into a crowd which had walked a long way and it was getting close to evening. <sup>9</sup> The Lord asked His disciples to give the crowd something to eat. They looked around and could only find a small lunch to feed over 5000 men, plus women and children. Lord Jesus used that lunch to miraculously feed the crowd until they were satisfied. Then, they picked up twelve baskets of scraps, one for each doubting disciple! <sup>15</sup>

Again, the Lord sent seventy-two disciples ahead of Him in teams of two. <sup>10</sup> They paved the way for the Lord helping people along the way in the Lord's name. They were cared for as they served.

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew 14:13-21.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 10:1-17.

**God has a right to own everything because He created everything. <sup>16</sup>**

**The next principle is . . .**

## **II. He has Chosen You to Be His Steward**

**He has chosen you to be His steward. <sup>17</sup>**

**So, what's a steward? A steward is a manager. <sup>18</sup>**

**The word “steward” in the original language <sup>11</sup> literally means “a man who is over a house”. He is one to whom a house has been entrusted. So he's a guardian or a curator. <sup>19</sup> Joseph was Potiphar's steward. <sup>12</sup> <sup>20</sup>**

**God entrusted men to be His stewards! <sup>21</sup> God put Adam in the garden and expected him to take care of it. <sup>13</sup> <sup>22</sup>**

**First Peter, chapter 4, verse 10, Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others,**

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<sup>11</sup> οἰκονόμος.

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 39:1-6.

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 2:15 - The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

**faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.** <sup>23</sup>

**First Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 2, Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.** <sup>24</sup>

**Again, in First Timothy, chapter 6, verse 20, Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge . . .** <sup>25</sup>

**God has given you delegated authority! Everyone who has served in the military understands this concept. A commander has absolute responsibility for everything that happens within his/her command. He is given authority to execute that responsibility. In turn, he delegates responsibility to others down his chain of command and gives them each the appropriate authority to execute their duties.** <sup>26</sup>

**Lord Jesus illustrated this idea through a story He told about a man who gave each of his three servants**



a sum of money to invest wisely while he was gone.<sup>14</sup> Each servant was given a responsibility, ample time and the master's trust to carry it out. When the man returned, each steward was commended or criticized for their faithfulness in carrying out their tasks.

We have learned that God owns everything and has chosen you to be His stewards.

So, what does God expect you to put in the offering plate?<sup>27</sup>

### **III. Do We Have Any Direction to Help Us Out?**

Do we have any direction to help us out?<sup>28</sup>

In the Old Testament of our Bible the direction was the tithe.

The tithe was one tenth of a person's gross income.<sup>29</sup>

But the tithe was also used for civic goods and services as well as support for the Temple ministry.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew 25:14-30.

**Should you use this example for your giving today? <sup>31</sup>  
Not if this standard is used legalistically!**

**What attitudes can develop when you view this command legalistically? Lord Jesus told a story about a Pharisee and a tax collector praying in the Temple. <sup>32</sup> He said, **The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. (Because) I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get’. (And . . . and . . . and) It’s like saying, “Oh how wonderful I am!”****

**The Pharisee was so proud of himself because he kept all the rules even to excess. Legalistic giving can lead to pride, haughtiness and a holier-than-thou attitude.**

**But, this was the Old Testament direction! <sup>33</sup>**

**In the New Testament of our Bible the direction was a cheerful heart. Second Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 7, **Each man should give what he has decided in his****

**heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. What does that mean?**

**In Exodus, chapter 35 and 36, God commands Moses to have the people build Him a sanctuary in the desert. So Moses assembles all the skilled laborers and, then, asks the people to volunteer their possessions to help in it's construction. The people were so thrilled at being asked to contribute that they did so abundantly. <sup>34</sup> In fact they were so generous, Moses had to ask them to stop giving! <sup>15</sup>**

**A few years ago when my wife and I were ministering to a small church in National City, California, we had a Spanish speaking congregation as part of our church. Our Mexican pastor owned a small farm on the outskirts of Tecate, Mexico. During the Christmas weekend each year our congregations would drive a couple of hours to the farm to provide a Christmas party for all the children in that Tecate farm**

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<sup>15</sup> Exodus 36:6-7 - "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.

community; a couple of hundred kids! Each of our families would bring dozens of small, inexpensive gifts for the children. Along with cake, ice cream and an abundance of candy we would conduct a worship service for them with plenty of singing. The joy that filled that day was indescribable!

I'll apply what I just said here in a few minutes! <sup>35</sup>

Now, here's the question. <sup>36</sup> Do you tithe what's left over after taxes? <sup>37</sup>

Technically, this is probably permissible to keep you from "robbing God". <sup>16</sup> But this is a legalistic approach, so be careful! <sup>38</sup> Lord Jesus criticized this kind of attitude when He said, **Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.**

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<sup>16</sup> Malachi 3:8 - "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings."

**You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.** <sup>17</sup>

**Besides, think of what a pain this would be to figure this out! You have Form 1040 deductions, sales taxes, gasoline taxes, groceries, retail purchases. You would need a computer and hours of time each day just to keep up with it!** <sup>39</sup>

**Do you tithe the gross of your total income? My wife and I, before we were married, agreed to make this standard the “base” of our financial commitment to the Lord.** <sup>40</sup> **This is a much simpler method; just add up your total income and divide by ten! There it is!** <sup>41</sup>

**However, this method could tempt you with a legalistic attitude even more than the previous one since you are giving more money this way.** <sup>42</sup>

**Besides, is the “Name It and Claim It” theology, that you might have heard from the radio and television evangelists, actually true?**

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew 23:23-24.

**What is that? Basically, the more you store up in heaven by giving to the church, the more God will shower material blessings on you. After all, isn't that what Malachi, chapter 3, says? God has certainly blessed me, and we tithe our gross income. I'm a pretty blessed guy!**

**But, I don't believe God's grace is showered on me in proportion to my giving. I have Christian brothers and sisters in other countries who give to the Lord far more sacrificially than I do. They are living in poverty and are persecuted for their commitment to Him. Does Malachi, chapter 3, apply only to Christians living in the United States?**

**What's the answer? <sup>43</sup>**

**You give sacrificially to the Lord until you find the joy!**

**<sup>44</sup> God promises to provide for you an abundant life.**

**John, chapter 10, verse 10, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full* (King James Version - have it abundantly).** <sup>45</sup> **But, this abundant life is not so**

much flooding your life with stuff as it is giving you a contentment and a peace with what you have! That's where the joy is! <sup>46</sup>

This is one of the main tools God uses to draw you close to Him! <sup>47</sup>

He wants you to give cheerfully! <sup>18</sup> <sup>48</sup> The disciples did just that. Acts, chapter 11, verse 29, **The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.** <sup>49</sup>

He wants you to give willingly! Second Corinthians, chapter 8, verse 12, **For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable** according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. <sup>50</sup>

Do you want the close personal walk with the Lord you've noticed some others have?

One of the major tools God provides to establish that intimacy is sacrificial giving! Give until it gives you joy! When you do that, your life receives blessing!

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<sup>18</sup> II Corinthians 9:7 - Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, **for God loves a cheerful giver.**

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