

# **Challenges Christians Face**

## **Concerning the Collection – Part 3**

*1 Corinthians 16:1-4*

**Rev. Freddy Fritz**

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## Concerning the Collection – Part 3

### Scripture

We continue our study in *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* in a series I am calling *Challenges Christians Face*.

One of the challenges that Christians face is the issue of finances. Two weeks ago I began a section *Concerning the Collection*. My intention is to preach four messages on the biblical principles of financial stewardship with respect to giving to the Lord.

I would like to reiterate that these messages are intended to help Christians grow in this vital area of discipleship. I have no desire to lay guilt trips on you. I want to motivate you on the basis of God's Word to obedience in this area of your Christian life.

As I mentioned previously, the material for this series of messages comes from John MacArthur, whose teaching on the subject I have found particularly helpful.

So, with that in mind, let's read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. In this text Paul gives us eight principles regarding financial stewardship:

**<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. <sup>3</sup> And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me. (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)**

### Introduction

Kim Peek is the man who inspired the 1988 film *Rain Man* about an autistic savant with astounding mathematical skills. Peek is what doctors call a mega-savant. A savant possesses remarkable expertise in 1 to 3 subjects. Peek is an expert in at least 15, includ-

ing history, sports, space, music, and geography. No one in the world is thought to possess a brain as extraordinary as Peek's. He has total recall of 9,000 books. It was discovered that each of Peek's eyes can read a separate page simultaneously, absorbing every word. In fact, a page that might take you or me 3 minutes to read, Peek can read in 10 seconds and *never* forget a word he read!

Kim Peek once went to a performance of Shakespeare's play, *Twelfth Night*. As the play was ending, Peek stood up and said out loud, "You've got to stop it! Stop it! Stop it!"

It turned out that the actor had skipped the second to the last verse of the play. The actor then apologized saying, "The verses are so much alike I didn't think it would matter."

Peek responded, "It mattered to William Shakespeare, and it should matter to you."<sup>1</sup>

That is how we should feel about the Word of God. God has given us his Word, the Scriptures. And if it mattered to God to give us his Word correctly, then it should matter to us too that we understand, interpret, and apply his Word correctly too.

The way we handle finances is one of the most important barometers of how we handle God's Word. The way we handle our finances is one of the most important indicators of our spiritual well-being. The Christian is one who seeks to love God with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). And to the extent that finances—or anything else, for that matter—rivals his love for God, to that extent he is struggling in his discipleship. And so these messages are designed to help you grow in your love for God.

## Review

Let me briefly review what I have covered so far.

### I. The Purpose of Giving (16:1)

First, we looked at the purpose of giving.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Original Rain Man," *The Week* (3-4-05), 40-41.

The purpose of giving as stated in verse 1 is **“for the saints,”** that is, for the church. The church is to fund its own ministry and needs. More specifically, as you study Scripture you discover that all giving falls essentially into two categories: to support the ministry of the Word and the ministry of mercy.

## II. The Period of Giving (16:2a)

Second, the period of giving.

Our giving is to be **“on the first day of every week”** (v. 2a). It is to be systematic, week after week, so that we come to grips with the stewardship of our money. Even though we may only give once a month, if we receive a pay check once a month, we should nevertheless be sensitive to our financial stewardship every week.

## III. The Participants in Giving (16:2b)

Third, the participants in giving.

Paul says that **“each of you** is to put something aside” (v. 2b). No-one is exempt from giving. No matter how poor you are, if you have *anything*, you have *something* to give. Giving is to be a spontaneous, cheerful response of a loving heart toward God who, in his grace, has given us everything.

## IV. The Place of Giving (16:2c)

Fourth, the place of giving.

The Greek word for **“store it up”** (v. 2c) is *thesaurizo*, from which we get the English word “thesaurus.” It has to do with a treasury. We are to give systematically and cheerfully to the treasury of the church on the first day of the week. The money collected is then to be distributed by godly leaders.

### Lesson

Let’s look at the next principle **“concerning the collection.”**

## V. The Proportion of Giving (16:2d)

Fifth, let's look at the proportion of giving.

The apostle Paul said in verse 2d: "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, **as he may prosper**, so that there will be no collecting when I come."

What proportion of our money are we to give? How much are we to give? The common answer is that we are to give 10%. Is that how much we should give?

This is perhaps the most vexing of all questions regarding financial stewardship.

Let's examine Scripture closely to learn what it teaches on this important question. Let's look at giving as follows:

- Giving before Moses,
- Giving from Moses to Jesus, and
- Giving from Jesus to the present.

Giving can generally be broken into two categories: freewill giving and required giving. Let's use these two categories as we study giving in Scripture.

### A. *Giving Before Moses*

First, let's look at giving before Moses.

#### 1. Freewill Giving

And let's start with freewill giving.

Prior to Moses some people gave a tithe to God. A "tithe" simply means "tenth." So people gave 10% to God.

For example, Abram gave a tenth to Melchizedek. We read about this in Genesis 14:18-20: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed [Abram] and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God

Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!’ *And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*”

Jacob also gave a tenth to the Lord. After Jacob fled from his father’s house, he spent a night at a place he called Bethel. There he had an encounter with God. At the end of this encounter, we read the following in Genesis 28:20-22: “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house. *And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you.*”

So, because of these passages, some people say, “You see, the tenth (or tithe) was before the Mosaic law, so it must supersede the Mosaic law and still be valid for us today.”

However, it’s interesting to go back and take a second look at giving before Moses. Abram gave a tenth *one time* in his whole life, for we never have a record that he ever gave a tenth again. Jacob also gave a tenth *one time*.

Furthermore, these two were the only ones who ever did it, even though there were many offerings given at that time.

From Cain and Abel’s first offering, all the way through all of the offerings ever given before Moses, there are only two times when anyone gave a tithe to God. And in neither case was the tithe commanded or binding as a standard for giving by God. These were what we can call “freewill gifts.”

## 2. Required Giving

On the other hand, there was required giving before Moses.

In Genesis 41 and 47 God required giving. He told the inhabitants of Egypt through Joseph that there was going to be a famine. God said that in order to take care of the needs of the people, Joseph must command everyone to give one-fifth of all that the land produced (Genesis 41:34; 47:24-26). Now, what percent is that?

20%! God gave 20% as a standard for giving for one reason—taxation. He was funding the government of Egypt so that it could meet the needs of its people.

That is the only indication that an amount was ever prescribed before Moses.

All other offerings were completely freewill offerings.

## *B. Giving from Moses to Jesus*

Now, let's look at giving from the time of Moses to Jesus.

### 1. Required Giving

Let's begin this time by looking at required giving.

As one studies the texts of Scripture, one discovers that from the time of Moses to the time of Jesus there were in fact three annual tithes in effect. The first tithe was called the *Levites' tithe*, the second tithe was the *festival tithe*, and the third tithe was the *poor tithe*. Let's look at each of these tithes more closely.

*The first tithe was the Levites' tithe.* The nation was divided into twelve tribes. One whole tribe, the Levites, served as the nation's priests and did not receive land as an inheritance. The tithe from all the other tribes was a taxation that went to supply the needs of the Levites. And so Numbers 18:20-21 says: "And the Lord said to Aaron, 'You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel. To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting.'"

*The second tithe was the festival tithe.* This tithe was to be brought to the central sanctuary appointed by God. The purpose of this tithe was to stimulate devotion to the Lord and national unity among all the people. It was like a national potluck because it made everybody share. We read about this in Deuteronomy 12:4-7: "You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way. But you shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose out of all

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your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. And there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the Lord your God has blessed you.”

*The third tithe was the poor tithe.* Deuteronomy 14:28-29 says: “At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.” Here is a third tithe that went to the poor. This was welfare, and it was required every third year.

So we have 10%, 10%, and 3 1/3% (that is 10 % every third year) that was required by God. So when someone says that the Jews gave 10% a year, that’s just plain wrong. They gave 23 1/3% per year. And all of that was required giving. The tithe was never related to freewill giving; it was a required taxation.

## 2. Freewill Giving

Now, let’s look at freewill giving from Moses to Jesus.

You may say, “Was there any freewill giving?” Yes, but it was over and above their taxation (of 23 1/3% each year).

Exodus 25:1-2 says: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me.’”

Now this doesn’t refer to one of their tithes. It was whatever they were willing to give from their hearts. That’s a beautiful spirit, and that’s the way it had always been. God didn’t tell Abram



how much to give when he was joyous; he just gave what was in his heart. God didn't tell Abel what to give; he just gave as his heart prompted him to give. God didn't tell Noah what to give when he made an offering to God after the flood; he gave as his heart prompted him to give.

And that's the same principle in this passage: *Give as your heart prompts you to give.*

Exodus 35:5, 21; 36:5-7 says: "Take from among you a contribution to the Lord. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord's contribution: gold, silver, and bronze. . . . And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the Lord's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments. . . . and said to Moses, 'The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.' So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, 'Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary.' So the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more."

Isn't that great? I've often thought of the day when we could come to church and say, "Folks, there will be no more offerings because we have too much!" It ought to be so, because it was then. They didn't need a prescription or an amount; all they needed was a heart that was willing, and they gave. They were investing with a God who could not be out-given.

And so you see, the only time the tithe ever came into play was in taxation, not in freewill giving.

### *C. Giving from Jesus to the Present*

Now, notice giving from the time of Jesus to the present.

#### 1. Required Giving

Let's first examine required giving from Jesus to the present. Romans 13:6-7 says: "For because of this you also pay taxes,

for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.” It doesn’t say “IRS” here, but the people at the IRS are God’s servants. God requires us to give taxes to the government.

Interestingly, the New Testament says exactly the same thing as the Old Testament as far as required giving is concerned.

### 2. Freewill Giving

Now, let’s look at freewill giving from Jesus to the present.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 says: “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

God won’t just give us back the spiritual blessing. He’ll make sure we have all sufficiency in all things. Verse 10 says: “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.” We will receive the physical bread and the spiritual fruit of righteousness by investing with God.

Romans 8:32 says that God, “who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” God is unspeakably generous in giving us his Son who bore our sin. God is unfathomably gracious in giving us all things. And the response of the Christian who has truly comprehended the generosity of God never asks, “How much can I keep for myself?” but rather, “How much can I give to my God?”

### **Conclusion**

So what does Paul say is the proportion you are to give in 1

Corinthians 16:2? You are to give exactly what you determine to give in your heart. For as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:7: “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” How much are you to give to the Lord? Whatever you want.

Now some of you may struggle with this. You say, “Pastor, that doesn’t tell me how much I am supposed to give.” Well, for those of you who would like a guideline, I would suggest that you give 10% of your income. Start with that as a base and work up from there.

Frank Barker was the founding pastor of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL. I believe he was the pastor of that church for about 40 years before he retired a few years ago. The Lord wonderfully blessed the ministry of Frank Barker. Briarwood Presbyterian Church is one of the largest churches in the PCA, with about 8,000 communicant members. They have started scores of ministries impacting the city, region, and the world with the gospel of God’s grace. I once read in *The Barna Update* that the city of Birmingham has one of the highest percentages of Christians in the nation. I have no doubt that part of the reason for that statistic is Briarwood Presbyterian Church and Frank Barker. Anyway, Frank started by giving 10% to the Lord. Over the years, he and his family maintained a very simple lifestyle so that by the time he retired he gave 75% of his income to the Lord! God wonderfully blessed Frank for his cheerful giving.

How often are you to give to the Lord? Weekly, dealing with giving on a regular basis.

Where are you to give to the Lord? Into the church so that it can be distributed by those who have spiritual oversight.

For what reasons are you to give to the church? So that the church might support its own, to meet their needs both spiritually and physically.

May God help us all to be cheerful givers and to give from a willing heart. Amen.



# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons)
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## Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

*Answers for Life!*

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: [Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org](mailto:Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

Web site: [www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org](http://www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

## Challenges Christians Face

### **PRAYER:**

Almighty God, thank you for your Word. Thank you for the Apostle Paul's clarity on this issue concerning the collection for the saints.

Help us to evaluate our giving in light of your Word. And prompt us to give in a way that advances your kingdom.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **BENEDICTION:**

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

### **CHARGE:**

Now, brothers and sisters, as you leave here today, remember that you are stewards of the gifts that God has given to you!