

Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “Great! He’s Talking About Money!”

Money is a subject that brings the full gamut of extreme responses. From wonderful joy – coming from those who have learned the spiritual secret of handling money, to the closed off and defensive responses from those who have *not* learned the spiritual secret of handling money.

Honestly, it is amazing to me the extreme responses I get when we discuss what *should be* a very Biblical, very crucial and very straightforward subject for any growing Christ-Follower.

Our heart condition toward our own money is often *don’t mess with my own money!* And certainly, that is the root of the problem, isn’t it? That in our heart it’s still *our own money!* We give God our heart so we can go to heaven. We give God our mind so we can start acting like we’re going to heaven. But... *give God our wallet?* I don’t know, that’s kind of a whole different deal.

God, I want to go to heaven and I don’t mind acting like I’m going to heaven... but now you want to talk about MY MONEY? Aren’t you getting a little personal now?

Yeah, God *is* getting *personal* – that’s why it’s called a personal relationship, because God wants to get *personal* with us.

Do you know that Jesus talked more about money than he talked about heaven and hell combined? One out of every ten verses in the gospels is about money. Sixteen of the parables Jesus told were specifically about money.

In the Bible there are approximately 500 verses on prayer and 500 verses on faith but there are over 2,000 verses on money. So, it would appear when we look at the *Bible statistics* – God does want to get personal with us about our money.

Can we try to allow him to do that today?

Let’s pray. *Lord Jesus, break through. Break through our love of money. Break through our desire for money. Break through this phenomenal misconception that getting more money is the answer to life. Lord, we right now, pray, that you Lord, would reveal to us how deceived we are as we chase after money in this life. Please Lord, speak to us. Get personal with us on this matter. In your name, Jesus, amen.*

Before we start, let me recommend my favorite book on this subject. “The Treasure Principle” By **Randy Alcorn** (updated edition).

It doesn’t take much Bible study to understand clearly that God want to get “personal” with us about our heart and our handling of our money.

So how do you think the Church at large is going getting “personal” with God about their money?

Before I answer that question, let me say this very clearly. We are incredibly blessed here in many spiritual areas to not fall into the “Church at large” statistics. We’ve been extremely blessed to watch God build here a small Church of large Christ Followers and I’m not talking about “heavy eaters”. What I’m say is *this church is not average*. But I do want to tell you what average *is*, okay?

In a book called The State of Church Giving (2015) the results of a thorough study and survey were recorded and here’s what they found. From 1933 to 2015 (82 years) the disposable personal income for the *average American* family – *adjusted for inflation* – increased by over 600%. During that same time average giving by church attending families decreased over 30%.

So, adjusted for inflation in the last 80 years, Christian families received a 600% increase in disposable income and have therefore decreased their giving to God by 30%. This would seem to indicate the more money we have for *ourselves*, the less money we have for *God*.

What might be worse is knowing that in 2015 the average giving for regular church attending families was 2% of disposable income (net) equaling less than %100 a month average per family. *I’m pretty sure those are spiritually disturbing statistics*.

But they do explain why the general tendency in church today is to ask, *why do you have to talk about my own money? Can’t we just move on to the great things God promises to do for me, that’s what I came to hear*.

The reason we have to talk about money is because the Bible talks a lot about money – more than we ever have.

And so, we get to our brief and critical text today in 1 Corinthians 16.

1 Corinthians 16:1–2 (NLT)

I Now regarding your question about the money being collected for God’s people in Jerusalem. You should follow the same procedure I gave to the churches in Galatia.

2 On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned. Don't wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once.

In these two verses – we have one question and three clear instructions... so let's go over them.

The Question - (verse 1) Now regarding your question about money being collected for God's people.

So, Paul is answering the last question they wrote to him about and isn't this so often our own last question? *Oh yeah, by the way, what should we do about the money thing you asked us to do? (you know, I almost forgot, if you're busy we don't have to talk about it).*

But, Paul is going to answer their question and very practically. In other places we see the *deep spiritual truths* that are tied to our giving. But here, Paul is simply laying down the practical order of giving and so we'll stay mostly practical, today.

The words ***"in Jerusalem"*** (verse 1) are added by the NLT for context because the money Paul is talking about here *is being collected* for the Believers in Jerusalem. But the original simply says ***regarding the collecting of money for God's people.***

So - Instruction #1 (verse 1) You should follow the same procedure I gave to the churches in Galatia

We know the situation for believers in Jerusalem was dire at this time and we know from Paul's other letters this was a *"Capital C" Church-wide-effort* to meet the needs of the saints and Paul was giving the same instructions to all the churches. If you want to read more about this multi-church giving effort read through 2 Corinthians Chapters 8-9 which is certainly the most detailed instructions of giving in the New Testament.

So, all the churches are given this same instruction.

Then – Instruction #2 (v.2) – On the first day of each week, put aside a portion of the money you've earned

Notice here, ***On the first day of each week*** which is Sunday. The truth is, there is no record in Scripture of the Christian Church meeting on Saturday *after Pentecost*. Since Acts Chapter 2, all Scripture references to formal church gatherings are on Sunday.

And so, Paul says, *on the first day of the week* (Sunday) *put aside a portion of the money you've earned* and he's *not* saying save up your own money (like a savings account).

The 3rd Instruction is at the **end of v.2** - *Don't wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once.*

The ESV says at the end of v.2

2 . . . so that there will be no collecting when I come.

Paul's saying, "*Give a portion (a Percentage) to God each week*" so that when it's needed it will already be there.

Let me give you a perfect example of this. Since we moved into this building 1 year and 5 months ago, we've put over \$80,000 into improving this property (not including employee costs). But you never heard me *ask for \$80,000* or *any* dollars because there are faithful givers who give every week and that money is held carefully under watchful eyes so that when it's needed, the money is there.

On a smaller scale, it's the same when we reach out to help people in need we don't stand here and say, *we have to collect this much money TODAY, in order to meet some need of the saints.*

Instead we know that God sends the provision *before* he sends the *guidance*. In other words, God *provides* – where he *guides*.

I can't tell you how often and how incredibly in awe I am of God's provision through the faithful givers here... miraculous!

And notice also (in verse 2) as always, the Bible says make your giving a portion of what you have earned – *a percentage*. Now as soon as I say that word – *a percentage* – there are people who are quick to say "The tithe is the Old Testament law" – we're not under that law.

And when I can I love to say to them – you're absolutely right and in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus dealt with a bunch of Old Testament laws including money and in every single one of them Jesus raised the bar from a *minimal physical requirement* to the *maximum spiritual requirement*. For those Christians who struggle with the Bible's pre-determined percentage command for giving if they would have the courage to look at what Jesus and the New Testament says about money, they would be more than happy to go back to only a ten percent tithe.

Because Jesus doesn't just ask for ten percent, Jesus asks for your heart and then he makes it clear the condition of your heart (in this area) is put on display by *how you give* and if we truly understood that, we would say to Jesus, ***“Lord, could we go back to JUST that 10% tithe and call it good?”***

And so now in our 1 Corinthians text, Paul puts in some good ole wisdom about how money should be handled. This is practical wisdom for both *accountability* with God's money *and* for *relationship building* between the churches.

1 Corinthians 16:3–4 (NLT)

3 When I come, I will write letters of recommendation for the messengers you choose to deliver your gift to Jerusalem.

4 And if it seems appropriate for me to go along, they can travel with me.

In essence – Paul is saying ***“Look, I'm Not going to Personally HANDLE this money, and I'm Not going to DELIVER this money it on my own”***

And we do the same thing here. I never have anything to do with collecting or accounting for the money given here. Some of you have come up to me and tried to hand me your offering and you know, I won't take it.

And also, if you're a minister here, you know when there's money to be delivered to someone in need I try my best to never do that – instead we try to send *you* for two reasons.

#1) To close the door on any potential accusations of me carrying or mishandling money

#2) To allow those receiving the money to establish a relationship with members of the church

Which is exactly what Paul is doing here. He wants the Jewish Jerusalem church to receive this offering directly from the gentile Corinthians church thereby establishing a relationship of the Gentile church caring for the Jewish church.

And that was intended to be a clear sign to *both churches*. To the Gentile Church in Corinth it was a sign that God saw them as an equal part of the Jewish Church in Jerusalem – both in blessings and in responsibility. And to the Jewish Church in Jerusalem, it was a sign that the Gentiles who had put their faith in the Messiah were a *true part* of the Church, even though they did not follow the Jewish customs.

Paul was doing way more than transferring money to those in need and when we give money to those in need, *our purpose* is always *way more* than just transferring money to them.

But here is the big picture that I don't want us to miss. From the beginning of this letter, Paul has been addressing the *problems* and *divisions* within this church. He's returned again and again to their core need for unity and agape love and now Paul brings all of that correction and all of that focus on unity and love and he makes it tangible.

He calls the church to put their words into action in a way that everyone can understand money. He's asking the Corinthians Church to put their money where their maturity is. They've claimed all through the letter to have *superior knowledge and spiritual maturity* and so now Paul says, show me *by how you give to God*.

You see, God knows the last thing we normally surrender to him is our money. So, throughout the Bible, how we handle our money is used as a sign of where our heart is truly at with God.

Consider these texts about God and money.

In Luke 3:7-14 when John the Baptist first began "*preparing the way of the Lord*" in his first recorded sermon when the people asked him what to do to show their repentance. John gave them three signs that would show their hearts had truly turned to the Lord. And all three signs of repentance had to do with their money and their possessions. They didn't ask John about money and possessions, they asked him about what to do to get right with God. But all of John's answers had to do with money.

Luke 19 tells the story of a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus who climbed a tree to see Jesus pass by and Jesus ended up going to his house for dinner. And during dinner Zacchaeus stood up and told Jesus, "*Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.*"

And at that point Jesus said to him, "*Today salvation has come to this house*" when Jesus saw that Zacchaeus' attitude about his money had radically changed.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said,

Matthew 6:19–21 (NLT)

19 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal.

20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do

not break in and steal.

21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

Where your Treasure is – THAT is where the Desires of your Heart – WILL GO

Here's a test you can try yourself. If you would say, I wish I had a heart for a certain work of God, then start financially investing into that work and I promise you, the more you invest into that work of God the more your heart will be tied to that work.

It's the same here – at Church.

Most often, the last thing a person does when they decided to make this church their home, is they start giving. And I don't mean *tipping God* like a bad waitress at Denny's. I mean *really, sacrificially giving*. And not just of their money, but their time, their effort and their heart. And I know for certain, every time that happens, people's treasure is being sent on to heaven and their hearts are going there as well.

There's a story about the Apostle Thomas and the King of the Indies (many believe Thomas took the gospel to the Indies). And the King of the Indies came and commissioned Thomas to build a magnificent palace for him and he gave Thomas as much gold and silver as he could ever need to do the job.

Then the king went into a distant country and was gone two years. Then, Thomas distributed all the king's treasures – gave it all away doing good on behalf of the king. And when the king returned and found out, he immediately threw Thomas into prison and sentenced him to death.

Meantime, the brother of the king died and was dead four days when he suddenly revived. When the king got to him his brother said "*the man you are about to kill is a servant of God*. Behold, I have been in Paradise and the angels showed to me the most wonderful palace I've ever seen" and they said, "*this is the palace that Thomas has built for your brother, the king.*"

The king immediately ran to the prison and released Thomas. Thomas said to him, your riches, "O king, I have sent on to heaven on your behalf for you to enjoy for eternity. Because while you can send your treasures on ahead of you, you can never get them to follow you once you're there."

Guys, we need to stop being afraid of giving. We need to ask ourselves, do we believe God or not and do we believe God's Word or not. God's Word says so much about

money and giving, but so often we skip over all that and get right to the “we get to heaven for free” part.

Hear me please.

What we believe about God is displayed

NOT by what we think

NOT by what we say

What we believe about God is displayed by our actions.

And for some of us, the biggest faith battle we will ever have is to commit to give sacrificially and regularly, and when we do Philippians 4:18 says,

Philippians 4:18 says (NLT)

18 [our offering will be] . . . a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God.

There is so much deep spiritual truth and spiritual growth tied to our giving. Please, don't miss it in order to chase the god of mammon.

Let's pray. *Lord, Jesus, please, make this real to us. Show us, Lord, the freedom, the joy, the exuberance, the absolute joy of living how you call us to live in regard to our money. Maybe for the first time ever or maybe again today, we say, Lord, it's all yours. You own it all. Not ten percent. Not ninety percent. It's all yours, along with everything else in our lives. Show us, Lord. Give us a desire to know how you would call us to use our money for your glory, for the Kingdom and to send our treasures to heaven. In your name, Jesus, amen.*