

The Offering

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

October 8, 2014

Midweek Provocative Questions

- What is your attitude toward giving an offering and intentional giving to God's work?
- What is the difference between giving an offering and paying dues?

SERMON POINTS/OUTLINE

- The church does not charge dues for those who participate in church life. Rather, church participants are invited to give an offering.
- The offering is a way of participating in the work of God.
- The offering is a response to God's words in Exodus 34:20: No one is to appear before me empty-handed.
- Our offerings are like thank you notes to God for the amazing gift of life through the sacrifice of Jesus.

A Guide for Daily Reading and Meditation

A Prayer for Every Day: O God, Giver of every good gift – of love and life itself, I come today thanking and praising you and lifting my life and heart to your care and keeping. Fill me with a desire to serve you and to praise you with my life and my resources. Teach me your ways – your ways of living and your ways of stewarding the amazing gifts you have poured into my life. Show me how to trust you as I respond to your invitation to live and give with a generous and joyful heart. In Christ's name. Amen.

SUNDAY – Review the midweek questions in light of today's worship

In light of today's sermon, ask yourself:

- What is your attitude toward giving an offering and intentional giving to God's work?
- What is the difference between giving an offering and paying dues?



MONDAY

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-48¹ (NRSV)

⁵¹ Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

This is the passage that *precedes* the passage we considered for this past Sunday. Read this passage several times and consider God's gift to you – the possibility of new life, forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, eternal life. Reflect on the gift described for at least 5 minutes. Jot some notes on what the gifts mean to you. How does God's mercy and gifts of grace and love make you feel?

Suggested responses: write a prayer or a poem of response or draw a picture of your future in God's care and love.



TUESDAY

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 (*The Message*)²

¹ Regarding the relief offering for poor Christians that is being collected, you get the same instructions I gave the churches in Galatia. ² Every Sunday each of you make an offering and put it in safekeeping. Be as generous as you can. When I get there you'll have it ready, and I won't have to make a special appeal. ³ Then after I arrive, I'll write letters authorizing whomever you delegate, and send them off to Jerusalem to deliver your gift. ⁴ If you think it best that I go along, I'll be glad to travel with them.

Read the scripture 3 times out loud. Each time, ask yourself a new question:

1. What words jump out at me today?

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2. What phrase seems to be the most important as I read this passage right now? Why?
3. What does this passage say to me about my gifts to God?

Note your thoughts in a journal.



WEDNESDAY

Re-read the scripture from yesterday's meditation.

Today consider this question: how do you determine what your offering will be? How will you respond to Paul's admonition to "be as generous as you can?"



THURSDAY

A reading for Thursday:

In order to serve the Lord we must have the patience to follow him wherever he may lead. Driving a car is a difficult task but being a passenger is even more difficult. Allowing someone else to have control over the direction you are going is sometimes unbearable. When you are a passenger, do you sometimes find yourself reaching for the steering wheel or stepping on an invisible brake? Even though the urge is strong, you don't take hold of the steering wheel because you know that the consequences can be dangerous!

Following Jesus, serving God, is much like being the passenger in a car. Though difficult to do, you have to let the driver have control over where you are going. Control is something we humans have a hard time letting go of. More so when it comes to our money. We want to know all the details of where our money is going, how it is going to be used and the rest of the details. As you consider your giving in 2015, give yourself the challenge to let God be in control over all that you give—After all, it's His to begin with, anyway!³

~Fylvia Fowler Kline

When have you allowed God to be in control? When have not allowed God to be in control? How are you being led to deepen your trust in God and to listen for God's direction? What commitment will you make today in terms of preparing for your financial commitment to God through RUMC in the coming year?



³ From *The Attitude of Giving* by Fylvia Fowler Kline, former assistant Director of the General Conference Stewardship Ministries of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Edited and prepared by the Stewardship Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. ©2001

FRIDAY

John Wesley gave us *A Covenant Prayer* which is often used at the beginning of the year in a Covenant Renewal service. Following yesterday's reading about allowing God to be in control, this prayer offers a way to respond to the questions posed with that reading.

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.

Amen.

How is this prayer speaking to you today?

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