



# The Southeast Sower

Southeast Church of Christ

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## The Local Church "Our Financial Responsibilities"

by Vernon Teagarden

From the earliest times, the work of the Lord's church has required financial resources for evangelism, edification and benevolence (Acts 2:44, 45; 4:34, 35; 11:27-30, etc.). In Acts 4:34 - 5:11, we read that members of the local church in Jerusalem brought money and "laid it at the apostle's feet" (Acts 4:35, 37, 5:2). From this standing treasury, the financial needs of the church were met (Acts 4:35). Furthermore, we learn that money contributed to this fund was no longer the private possession of the donor (Acts 5:2-4). It now belonged to the Lord!

In 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2, we are furnished more specific information regarding circumstances under which contributions are to be made into the common treasury of the congregation. It is to be done on the first day of every week in the assembly of the church. Specification of this day automatically eliminates any other day, and that this contribution was to be made in the assembly seems clear from the stipulation that it was to be done on the first day of the week. (cf. Acts 20:7). Else, why would the contribution

need to be made specifically on that day?

The needs for which the early Christians contributed money to the local church's treasury (evangelism, edification and benevolence), continue today. Therefore, Christians continue to have financial obligations to meet these needs. This is an area where our brethren may or may not know whether we are meeting our responsibilities, but the Lord does know (Heb. 4:12, 13). What, then, are the characteristics of giving that are acceptable to the Lord?

### THE GIVING OF SELF FIRST

What enabled the churches of Macedonia to be such liberal givers? It is said that they had "first given themselves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5). When people honestly and truly devote themselves to God, they will find no difficulty in having the means to contribute to the cause of Christ. However, it starts with the individual and his attitude toward himself and his possessions. Cultivating a good attitude toward giving starts by understanding that we are not our own. We have been bought with a price, and we are even to give our own bodies as living sacrifices (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rom. 12:1). In short, to first give ourselves to

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The Southeast

Church of Christ meets at:

35 Walnut Court

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone: 330.628.7432

### SERVICES:

#### Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:30 am

6:00 pm

#### Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

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God is to consecrate all that we have to his service, and this is according to His will (Matt. 22:37; cf. Deut. 6:5).

### WORSHIPFUL

To truly worship God, our giving must be more than a mechanical routine we go through. It must proceed from the heart with a proper attitude. Worshipful giving recognizes that God does not "need" our gifts (Psa. 50:10-12; Acts 17:24, 25); rather, we need to give them. True giving honors God (Prov. 3:9), while

improper giving robs Him (Mal. 3:9). Remember, giving involves the heart (2 Cor. 9:7), and the heart involves worship, which entails worshipping God in “spirit” as well as truth (Jn. 4:24).

### REGULAR

1 Corinthians 16:2 teaches us that we are to give regularly, not just when it is convenient or easy, but every Lord’s day as we have been prospered. Further, one is to give as he has purposed in his heart (2 Cor. 9:7). This involves planning and planned giving involves priorities (Matt. 6:33). The Lord deserves our “first-fruits,” not the leftovers (Prov. 3:9, 10; cf. Lev. 23:9-4). We can commit ourselves to twenty-five or thirty years of regular monthly house payment; can we not commit ourselves to a definite plan of giving? The church needs to have a planned program of work, and the individual needs to have a planned program of giving regularly to that work. Elders need to see that money contributed is spent in a scriptural and wise manner, and challenge members to meet specific needs. Unnecessarily large amounts of money resting in a savings account discourages liberal giving and reflects a lack of purpose in the work.

### PERSONAL

None who can give are exempt (1 Cor. 16:2). All are to participate in the contribution and take an active interest in how it is used. Husbands and wives can and should work together in contributing into the common

fund of the local church (Acts 5: ff. ). Remarks like, “My contribution won’t be missed” and “It’s nobodies business what I give” are wrong and indicate a bad attitude. What if all the members of the local congregation, of which you are a member, had that kind of attitude toward giving? How much of the Lord’s work would be accomplished? Each Christian is responsible to “lay by in store as God has prospered” him so that the work of the church can be done. Cheating the Lord of what is rightfully His is only cheating yourself (cf. 2 Cor. 9:6, 8).

### ACCORDING TO ABILITY

Many passages teach this principle (Lk. 12:48; Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:12; cf. Deut. 16:16, 17; Ezra 2:68, 69). However, let us be careful not to underestimate our ability. The Macedonians gave out of “deep poverty” and “beyond their power” (2 Cor. 8:2, 3). We should strive to increase our ability (Eph. 4:28). As our “prosperity” increases, we need to make prompt adjustments in our giving.

### GENEROUS

Generosity is measured in terms of sacrifice, and what is no sacrifice is not really generous (2 Sam. 24:24; Mal. 1:2, 13; Mk. 12:41-44). Our degree of generosity in giving may indicate that our attitude toward material possessions is not what it should be (Matt. 6:19-21; Lk. 12:15; 1 Tim. 6:17-19). We need to adjust our living to our giving, and not vice-versa. Our “hoarding

instinct” may turn out not to provide the security we thought (Lk. 12:13-21).

Furthermore, we need to avoid comparisons with what others are able to give. Such comparisons are always unwise (2 Cor. 10:12). Instead of comparing ourselves with what others are doing let us remember that we shall reap what “we” sow (2 Cor. 9:6, 7; Gal. 6:7), not what someone else sows. Also remember that generous giving will be returned (Prov. 3:9, 10; 11:24, 25; Mk. 10:28-31; Lk. 6:38). Since we are simply “stewards” of our possessions (Lk. 16:1-14; 1 Cor. 4:2; 1 Pet. 4:10, etc.), the real question is not, “How much of my substance am I willing to give to the Lord,” but “How much of what the Lord has entrusted to me shall I keep?”

### CHEERFUL

Jesus said that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35), and God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). In view of what God has given us (Jn. 3:16; 2 Cor. 8:), how could we not cheerfully return to Him whatever is required?

Nothing sacrificed for the Lord will go un-repaid (Mk. 10:28-31). On the other hand, what a needless tragedy it would be to be lost because we failed in our responsibility to give sacrificially. May we reevaluate our attitudes on this subject and determine to “give as we have been prospered.” Remember that it is a privilege to give back to the Lord a small portion of what He has blessed us with (2 Cor. 8:4).