

Offerings for Jesus



SABBATH—JANUARY 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 6:31–34; Psalm 116:12–14; 1 Chronicles 16:29; Mark 12:41–44; Mark 14:3–9.

MEMORY VERSE: “What can I give the Lord for all the good things he has given to me? I will give him a drink offering for saving me. And I will pray to the Lord. In front of all his people, I will give the Lord what I promised” (Psalm 116:12–14, ICB).



We bring our gifts of money to God to show Him our thanks for everything He does for us.

WE GIVE GOD our tithe. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. We also give offerings to God. We give Him our offerings from the money left over after we pay tithe. Our offerings show what is in our hearts. The Israelites gave many different offerings to show what was in their hearts, too. They gave sin offerings to show God they were thankful for His mercy. God's people gave thank offerings to show God that they were grateful for His protection. Israel also gave God offerings to thank Him for blessing them with health, riches, and life. God's people also gave special offerings for the poor. God's people gave offerings to build and repair God's temple, too.

Our offerings are about more than buying special robes for the church's singers or paving the church parking lot. We bring our gifts of money to God to show Him our thanks for everything He does for us. “We love because God first loved us” (1 John 4:19, ERV). The church uses our gifts of money to support God's work worldwide and in the local church. This week we will study what the Bible says about offerings and how we use them to do God's work on earth.

THE REASONS FOR GIVING (Matthew 6:31–34)

We love God because He first loved us. We give to Him because of His wonderful Gift to us: Jesus. We are told, “The Lord doesn’t need our offerings. We can’t make God rich by the gifts we give Him. King David says, ‘Everything comes from you. We have given you back what you gave us.’ [1 Chronicles 29:14, ICB]. God wants us to show Him that we are thankful for His blessings. God accepts our offerings that we give Him with thankful hearts. We give this money to God so that He can use it to bless other people, too. God gives us no other way to show Him our love and thankfulness.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, page 18, adapted.

When we give “our” money to Jesus, our giving makes our love for God and other people stronger. So, money can do a lot of good. Jesus talked a lot about money and riches. One verse out of every six verses in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is about money. The good news is that God can save us from the wrong use of money. He can save us from loving money more than we love Him, too.

What does God promise to do for us if we obey Him? Read Matthew 6:31–34 and Deuteronomy 28:1–14 for the answer. Are we being selfish to ask God to keep His promises to us?

Our offerings show that we don’t want to be selfish. Giving our offerings to God can be a deeply spiritual experience for us. When we give offerings to God, we show that we give our lives fully to Him. You can say with your words that you love God. But your offerings help show your love and make that love stronger.

We give offerings to God because we trust Him. We believe He gives us everything we need. God knows what is best for us. Our offerings also show that we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. We can’t buy God’s mercy, good favor, or blessings. Our offerings must come from hearts that accept Jesus and His saving gift by faith.

What is the Lord saying to us in 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7? What does Paul mean when he says, “Each one of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give” (ERV)? Why does the Lord love people who are happy to give?



One verse out of every six verses in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is about money.

HOW MUCH OFFERING DO WE GIVE? (Psalm 116:12–14)

God tells us to give Him tithe. As we know, tithe is 10% of all the money we get. But God doesn't tell us how much offering to give. What important rule does God give us to help us decide how much offering to give Him? Read Deuteronomy 16:17 for the answer.



God lets us decide how much offering we will give and where we will send our gifts of money.

Our offerings show that we thank God for His many gifts and blessings. Deuteronomy 16:17 shows us an important rule about how much offering we should give. We give God as much as we can because of how much He blesses us. “ ‘Everyone who has been given much will be responsible for much. Much more will be expected from the one who has been given more’ ” (Luke 12:48, ICB).

Read Psalm 116:12–14. What is the correct answer to the question in verse 12? How do these verses help us to understand how much offering we should give?

How can we pay God back for all His blessings to us? Really, we never can. The best we can do is give as much as we can to support His work on this earth and to help other people. When Jesus sent out His followers to do His work, He told them, “ ‘I give you these powers [special gifts] freely. So help other people freely’ ” (Matthew 10:8, ICB). When we give, we become more loving. So, we must use our offerings to help other people and support God's work.

Let's always remember that “God loved the world [humans] so much that he gave” (John 3:16, ERV). The more selfish we are, the more selfish our hearts will become. The worse we will feel, too.

God lets us decide how much offering we will give and where we will send our gifts of money. Wherever we send our offerings and whatever amount we give, it is our duty as Christians to give an offering to the Lord. When we fail to give God an offering, we hurt ourselves more than we understand. We also rob God of what belongs to Him.

What do your offerings and your feelings about giving say about your connection to God?

OFFERINGS AND WORSHIP (1 Chronicles 16:29)

The Bible doesn't tell us what we should do when we worship God at church. But the Bible does tell us about four things that should be part of our worship experience. These four things include: (1) study and/or preaching, (2) prayer, (3) music, and (4) tithes and offerings. As we know, tithe is 10% of all the money we get.

Three times each year the men and families from Israel went to Jerusalem to meet with the Lord for special holidays. " 'Everyone who comes to meet with the LORD must bring a gift' " (Deuteronomy 16:16, ERV). So, we see that part of our worship experience includes tithes and offerings.

This verse shows us that the worship experience for Israelites included their giving tithes and offerings. Worship is more than sermons, songs, and prayers. We also show God that we are thankful when we bring our offerings to Him. The Israelites brought their offerings to the temple. We bring our offerings to the church on Sabbath. (Some people give their offerings to God online.) These gifts are another way we worship God.

Read 1 Chronicles 16:29; Psalm 96:8, 9; and Psalm 116:16–18. What important Bible rules do you read about in these verses? How do we live out these rules in our own worship experience?

As God's children, we are responsible for managing His business on this earth. So, we must bring God our offerings. At the same time, we feel honored to bring God our offerings, too. Do you have kids? If yes, then share with your children the joy you feel when you bring your tithes and offerings to God. Teach them that giving tithe and offerings to God is part of their worship experience with God.

How do you worship God with tithe and offerings? How did your tithes and offerings help your friendship with God grow stronger?

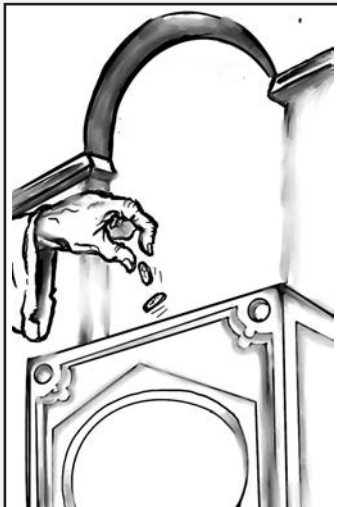


Worship is more than sermons, songs, and prayers.

GOD KNOWS HOW MUCH WE GIVE (Mark 12:41–44)

Read the story in Mark 12:41–44 about the widow. What message can we take from this story? What important rule does this story teach us? How can we live by this rule? In what ways can it make our worship experience stronger?

Jesus and His followers stood in the area next to the temple. The priests or religious leaders put money boxes for the temple in this area. Jesus watched the people bring their gifts of money to put in the boxes. Jesus saw a widow put in two copper coins. The widow put in all the money she had. “Jesus understood the reasons for the widow’s gift. Jesus knew why she gave. The widow believed that God set up the temple. So, the widow wanted to do everything she could to support its work. The woman did her best to help. Jesus said that people will always remember the widow and her gift. The widow will feel joy in heaven because of her gift, too. Jesus judged the real worth of her gift. The widow’s love for God made her gift much more valuable than it was worth. The widow felt a deep interest in supporting God’s work. That interest caused her to give all that she had to God.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, page 175, adapted.



The widow put in all the money she had.

Do you know that the widow’s gift is the only offering to the church that Jesus praised? That shouldn’t really surprise us. The widow gave all her money to a church that was about to reject Jesus. Jesus also gave up everything He had for this church, too.

Read Acts 10:1–4. Why did a Roman army leader get a visit from an angel from heaven? What two things did the Roman army leader do that God saw and praised?

God hears our prayers. He also knows why we give gifts. Acts 10:1–4 shows us that Cornelius gave a lot of money to support God’s work. “ ‘Your heart will be where your treasure is’ ” (Matthew 6:21, ERV). Cornelius’s gifts show us he was ready to learn more about Jesus. Prayer and helping the poor show the two important rules of God’s law: (1) love for God and (2) love for people. The Bible says, “ ‘Love the Lord your God. Love him with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ Also, ‘You must love your neighbor as you love yourself’ ” (Luke 10:27, ICB). Prayer shows our love for God. Giving offerings to help the poor shows our love for other people.

MARY'S GIFT (Mark 14:3–9)

Research shows that only about 9% of the things people own are cash. This cash can include money in a savings account, checking account, or other special savings accounts for retirement. Most of our money is not cash in our bank or our wallet but in the things we own. These include our homes, our farm animals, or other things.

Read Mark 14:3–9 and John 12:2–8. Who were the guests at Simon's feast? How much was Mary's gift really worth? Why did Mary pour oil on Jesus' feet and wash them with her hair during the feast?

Mary's gift was worth 300 denarii. A denarius was a type of Roman coin. 300 Roman denarii was a full year's pay. After Mary poured this expensive gift on Jesus' head and feet, Judas got angry at Jesus. Then Judas sold Jesus to the religious leaders for only 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15). Compared to Mary's gift, the pay Judas got was not very much. The 30 pieces of silver were only worth one-third of the amount of money that Mary's expensive perfume was worth. But Judas was selfish and greedy. A greedy person is someone who wants too much. When we get greedy as Judas was, we can sell ourselves to Satan for far less than we are worth.

Barnabas is an example of a giving person. Barnabas is very different from Judas. We know Barnabas mostly as Paul's companion. The New Testament tells us 28 times about the work that Barnabas did for God. For sure, Barnabas was a hard worker. He loved God so much. Barnabas spent his life traveling from place to place to share the Good News about Jesus with people everywhere. What was the secret to Barnabas's success? Read the answer in Acts 4:36, 37. These verses talk about Barnabas's big offering. Barnabas is a powerful example of Jesus' words: " 'Your heart will be where your treasure is' " (Matthew 6:21, ERV).

Barnabas did not spend his money on himself. He gave everything he could to help support God's cause. How does God bless us when we give offerings to bless other people?



A greedy person is someone who wants too much.



“God wants people to pray and plan for His work to succeed.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: God keeps a record in heaven of everything we give to support His cause. “An angel from heaven keeps record of every offering we give to God. The angel also writes down how that offering is used and who the money helps. God sees every penny we give in faith to His cause. God sees how willing we are to give our offerings, too. God can see all the thoughts and feelings in our hearts. The angel writes down the reason in our hearts we have for giving our offerings. God will give gifts to His followers who give back to Him what belongs to Him. When you give, you hope your offerings will bring honor to God and help save people. But sometimes the church may not spend the money wisely. So, the good work you tried to support doesn’t happen. Don’t worry. God will bless you anyway. When we put God first in our lives, He will bless all our offerings.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2, page 518, adapted.

“God wants people to pray and plan for His work to succeed. We must behave as Cornelius. Cornelius not only prayed for God’s work to succeed. Cornelius also gave offerings. So, we must pray and give, too. God will remember our prayers and our gifts. We show our faith by the good things that we do for God. When we join our faith to action, we will have a living faith. Without a living faith, we can’t please God. While we pray, we must give everything we possibly can to God. We must work hard and support His cause with our money. Then God will answer our prayers. If we live what we believe, God will remember us. God makes a record of every act of love we do. He sees all the money we save to support His work. God will give us chances in life to show our faith by acts of love.”—Ellen G. White, *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, June 17, 1903, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why must we pray and work? How do these things go together? That is, how does praying help you know what to give, when to give, and how much?
- ② In the first Ellen G. White quote above, she talks about money that is not spent wisely. Why should we remember Sister White’s words when we give?

A YOUNG ARTIST'S GIFT

My husband and I live in Japan with our 14-year-old son, Eichiro. Eichiro loves to draw. He wanted to buy an electric drawing pad or computer tablet to help him make his art. So, Eichiro decided to save money during his summer vacation to buy the tablet.

Eichiro carefully researched computer tablets online. He looked for the best tablet for his needs. Soon Eichiro found a tablet he liked. He went to the store with his father to see the tablet and try using it. Then Eichiro looked for ways to earn money to buy the tablet. I helped my son by paying him money to do extra chores around the house.

After some time, Eichiro saved up 55,000 Japanese yen. Yen is Japanese money. 55,000 yen is the same as \$500.00 in U.S. money. Then Eichiro ordered his tablet online.

Eichiro was so excited. "My tablet will arrive soon!" he told me. Every three hours, he went to the online store to check when his package was coming.

A few days later, the package arrived. Eichiro opened the package carefully. First, he read the information booklet that came with the tablet. Eichiro learned all about the tablet and how to use it. Then he started to paint. For the next three days, Eichiro behaved the same as a professional artist. He painted all day in his "art studio." (His art studio really was his bedroom!) Then he came out of his room and made a surprising announcement. "I'm thinking about giving my tablet away," he said. Eichiro said he saw a show on TV. The show was made by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Japan. The show was about how some Japanese artists were making a comic book from Ellen G. White's book *The Great Controversy*. Eichiro saw a young Adventist artist on the TV show who was working on the comic book. The artist had an old tablet.

Eichiro said, "I want the artist to use my new tablet. I think my new tablet will help her to get more work done. I will ask God if this is what He wants me to do."

I contacted the person in charge of the comic book. This person put me in touch with the young artist that my son saw on TV. Yes, the artist did need a new tablet, the same tablet that Eichiro had. But when the artist learned that Eichiro worked so hard for it, she refused to accept the tablet. I told the artist that Eichiro prayed about his decision. He believed God wanted him to give his tablet to the her. "Then I will accept the tablet with a grateful heart," the artist said.

I believe the Holy Spirit touched my son's heart in a powerful way. Let's all obey God as my son did when God asks us to help Him do His work on earth.

INSIDE
Story
by SACHIKO OBARA



"I'm thinking about giving my tablet away," he said.

