



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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Taste Tested Christians

I would like to draw your attention to a verse found in Psalm 34. I would like to think a little bit along the line of being taste tested Christians. Today, there are many items made to suit our every taste. Items from food to furniture, houses to vehicles — many different things. Almost any object we can think of is tailored to fit each and every person's taste or how they would like it. Unfortunately there are

even churches today that are tailored for every kind of belief. There is a colour, model, style, flavour, variety, size, and a price to suit each individual taste.

Much money, time and effort goes into seeing what people's tastes really are, what they will buy and what they want. Something very unique or different may come along and people are told, "Maybe you will not like it right away. You need to

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develop a taste for it.” Some of these tastes can be good and some not so good.

I want to look at an invitation to a taste that is for everyone. We find this in Psalm 34:8. The psalmist David says, “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” Some surrounding verses we find the prerequisites for the kind of tastes which we need to have, as we think of the taste that is for everyone and the invitation

that is universal — whosoever will. I believe the psalmist David is saying, “Come with me and experience the good things of the Lord.”

We know that nothing is so convincing as experience. As we experience something we are convinced of it whether it is for good or bad. David and Paul both speak of having tasted of the heavenly things, and having tasted of “the good word of God.” (Hebrews 6:5) David is using

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some emphatical language as he says, "O taste and see." The sense of taste includes our sight, smell and our touch.

The invitation is not to see and taste, but to "taste and see." Usually, when we taste something, we probably first look at it and we might observe it with our sense of sight. However, here we are tasting before we can see. We are called to relish the divine things of God before we can see and enjoy God. This is a voice that sounds throughout the Scriptures and also is echoed by godly generations that have gone on before us.

We might ask the question, "How do we develop a taste for the good things of God?" We talked earlier of maybe needing to develop a taste for some things. Our initial reaction may not be very positive. The Bible tells us that some men's perspectives are so warped that they call good evil and evil good. (Isaiah 5:20) The natural man would say that revenge is sweet and the act of forgiveness is stale. However, we believe otherwise. The Bible teaches us otherwise. One way that we develop this kind of taste is by exercising a faith and a godly fear and trust in God, allowing His spirit to work in and

through us, making us children of His.

The latter part of verse 8 says, "blessed is the man that trusteth in him," (or in the Lord). He is putting his full confidence and trust in Him. Verse 9 talks of having a godly fear. "O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him." We also need to exercise a humbleness before Him as we notice in verse 18. "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

We also develop a taste and become taste tested by studying God's Word with an open mind and heart, by both personal study by collective study such as we may be involved in from night to night as we experience a Bible School setting. We will be able to become taste tested Christians.

I like the words which we find in Jeremiah 15:16, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts." As we continue to "taste and see that the Lord is good," the Lord is indeed willing to pour out His storehouses of blessing upon us as we wait before Him.

New Testament Guidelines for Giving

I think probably each of us has an opinion of ourselves as to what kind of giver we are. I would further suggest that I expect the large majority of consider yourselves to be fairly good givers. I wonder if there is anyone who would consider himself a little bit on the stingy side — a little bit tight. We usually think that the way that we do things is about right. Are you expecting that I will “pat you on the back,” or are you expecting that I will prod you, or what exactly do you expect? It came to my mind as I was studying and considering this message that I will not tell you anything new really. You know what the Bible says, and I believe that you are trying to obey it too. It seems to me that the intent of this message basically is to stimulate us. It is one thing that I want to do and perhaps our consideration here can stimulate us to do a better job of that work.

Is it not true that we handle a lot of money? If we would consider the money that went through the hands of this group of people this past year, we would have a fairly large figure. Is it not also true that God has a great interest in what happens to our money? It is not something

that thousands of dollars have passed through my hands and God did not really pay too much attention to it. The Lord was watching. He was interested what we did with our money.

Ephesians 4:28 tells us, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” On the basis of that verse we see God wants our means to reach beyond ourselves. We work. “If any provide not for his own” (1 Timothy 5:8), he has failed. God wants us to provide for our own, but God wants our resources to go beyond ourselves that we may have to give to others. Some people are very liberal in their giving and some are not as liberal. Who in the Bible comes to your mind when you think of a liberal giver? Also, the Bible records other givers. When we think of people in the Scriptures who were stingy and selfish, who comes to our mind?

Open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 8:1–7. As I understand the setting here, Paul is writing to the Corinthians and he held before them, as an example, what the churches of Macedonia had done. The churches of

Macedonia had set an excellent example in giving. “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.” In the grace of giving we need to abound in this grace also.

1) *The first thing, if we are intending to give to the Lord, we start by giving ourselves.* These Macedonian people in verse 5, “first gave their own selves to the Lord.” This is the first guideline. We will give money too, but we must give ourselves first. Which is easier, to give ourselves or to

give money? Many times, it is easier to give money than it is to give ourselves. Did you ever hear anyone say, “I pray thee have me excused?” (Luke 14:18) That is a Bible phrase, is it not? It did not stop with Bible times. We hear that today too. I guess we say it ourselves do we not? God needs money. God wants our resources. He wants us to give our money, but God wants us first of all. Really, if we have not first committed our lives to the Lord, then our money will not amount to anything either. God wants us.

We sing the song, “For Christ and the Church, willing offerings make, Time and talents and gold.” That does not get to the gold until it has first talked about our time and talents. Someone remarked, “They think that is the right order, time and talents and gold.” Too often, when there is a need, the first thing we are ready to do is reach for our wallet. That is not always what it takes. Which is easier, to put some money in the offering for the work in Guatemala, or to answer the call to the mission field? I know that we cannot all go to the mission field. Not everyone is responsible. Which is easier? (You know with me which is easier). Giving out the *Living Waters For Thirsty Souls* or *The*

Star of Hope calls for the person. We cannot put money in the offering to take the place of that. It calls for people to do that. Street meetings are one where I know when the time comes around (it might fall on a Saturday) our Saturdays are busy, and God wants us first. I am not saying that we must respond to every call for help ourselves personally, but give ourselves first. Commit ourselves to the Lord.

It happened once in our church where we were doing some repairs and it was discussed about brethren coming to help in the work. It was mentioned to one brother about coming and helping. He said, "No, I have to go to work, so I have something to give." If he had come and helped at the church, he would have been giving that way too. In fact, to help one day at church out of a five- or six-day work week is a rather significant contribution, is it not? It is not all money. In fact, before we give our money let us first of all be sure that we have given ourselves to the work of the Lord.

b) Secondly, in this if we have committed ourselves to the Lord, there is a sense in which we can say, "God has everything. All the money that I have, my vehicle, my property, it is all the Lord's," and it is, is it not? We have com-

mitted it to the Lord. There is one nice thing about that: it is the Lord's and we get to use it. We still enjoy the benefits of it. There must be more to it than simply saying, "This is all committed to the Lord." Beyond committing everything we have to the Lord, God would have us to deliberately give of our resources to Him. Some of it should actually pass out of our hands. It is the Lord's and it goes from our hands to the Lord's work.

2) *I will suggest as a second guideline that we can start by giving one-tenth of our resources — one-tenth of our profit that we are making.* You may say, "Now where is the New Testament command for that?" Turn to Matthew 23 (and I will point out that the Sermon title does not say, "New Testament Command." It says, "New Testament Guidelines"). As we take this Scripture, it does seem that the tenth has been what God has asked for in the past, and it seems very reasonable to continue giving Him a tenth as a minimum. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to

leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23). I understand the mint and the anise and the cumin to be herbs, seasonings, just little things, little amounts. These scribes and Pharisees were being very careful about these teeny, tiny things to give a tenth, but then they were being careless in the other areas. Jesus said unto them, “You should have paid attention to the law and judgment and mercy. That you should have done.” What did Jesus say next? “You should not have left the other undone.” — giving that tenth. That was right. It was good. That is as close as I know that the New Testament gives to telling us to give a tenth.

We look back at the Old Testament and God required that His people give a tenth. They gave a tenth of their crops, their fruit of the field, and flocks. Interestingly, when they brought their tithe to support the Levites, and the Levites took it, they had to give a tenth of what they received. It was a deeply ingrained principle that they gave a tenth. In addition, they gave numerous other things too. We do well in our day to give a tenth, and I say to start with a tenth. One writer, on financial directions, said it this way (and I liked what he said), “A tithe is a testimony to God’s ownership. I sim-

ply take this tenth and I give it to the Lord. It is a testimony that everything I have is the Lord’s. I said “start with a tenth.”

3) *A third guideline is in I Corinthians 16:2 — we give in proportion to what the Lord gives us.* “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” “As God hath prospered him.” I take from that more than simply as I earn more, and more, and more money a tenth amounts to more, and more, and more. If I have a \$20,000 income and I give one-tenth of that to the Lord that is \$2,000 and that leaves me with \$18,000 for myself. If I have a \$40,000 income, and I give one tenth to the Lord that is \$4,000. That leaves me with \$36,000 to myself. That is quite a difference — \$18,000 or \$36,000. That is a realistic range I think. We have a larger range than that in relation to the earnings which we earn. What does the government do to the man who earns a higher income? They take a larger percentage do they not? When we start getting bigger incomes, the bite that the government takes out of it is a bigger bite and the percentage increases. It is very good for us, likewise, as our means increase, to give more and

more as the Lord has prospered us.

Having said that, I am ready for your response. Whom do we think of in the Scriptures as the most generous giver that comes to our mind? The widow. She gave her two mites, a very small gift. She was very generous. Whom do we think of as one of the most selfish men/women in the Bible? Nabal. Yes, there is also the apostle who was a thief (Judas). He was interested in keeping things for himself. I thought also of the rich fool who had a tremendous increase. We do not read any record that he was thinking of sharing this with other people. This he had all for himself and he planned to keep it.

I will ask you this. Is there any significance to the fact that the poor, poor widow was so generous and the rich man was stingy? There was another rich man who did not do a whole lot better did he? He had a beggar laid at his gate, wishing for crumbs. Is there any significance that the rich men were tight and the poor widow was such a generous giver? I think there is. It is human nature that when we get more we do not grow generous, but rather we become selfish. That is human nature for some reason. I do not say that to condemn anyone who is a wealthy

man, or has significant means.

I am glad that the Bible does record at least one rich man who was generous too. Abraham was a rich man and he gave very unselfishly to his nephew Lot. We are not here to condemn rich men, but let us take a challenge. One man who was earning a \$250. per week income, and was paying his tithe to the Lord, found his income increasing and increasing until it was a \$1,000 a week. He went to his pastor with a guilty conscience and confessed, "When I had a lower income, it was easy for me to tithe and to give of my income to the Lord. But, now that it has increased so greatly, I am finding it much more difficult to give these large amounts of money. Will you please pray for me." His pastor did pray for him. He prayed that God would reduce the man's income again, so that he could give cheerfully and willingly. That is not what the man wanted.

I do not think that we are stingy givers, but I do not believe that the challenge hurts any one of us. Someone asked the question, "Do we give of our means or do we give of our meanness." For a rich man to give small amounts, I think, is giving of his meanness. Now, the person who cannot give as much, we read in

2 Corinthians 8, that we give as the Lord prospers us. I like what it says in 2 Corinthians 8:12, “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” God accepts what we have, not what we do not have. He does not expect us to give money that we do not have to give. It is accepted according to what we have. Really, I get the impression from the account of the poor widow, that Jesus was extremely pleased with her gift. He saw her giving and He saw the rich men. He praised her for what she had done. A poor person can give as liberally as a rich person and I believe it counts as much with the Lord, or more, perhaps at times.

4) *We believe that the New Testament shows us to give sacrificially.* I fear that I have yet to learn what it really means to give sacrificially. There are several examples from the Scriptures. 2 Corinthians 8:2 said of these Macedonians, “That in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” That was another example where poor people were very generous. Then, we read in verse 3, “For to their power, I bear record, yea, and

beyond their power they were willing of themselves.” I am not sure what you will take from that but to give “beyond their power;” to me means that they gave more than they could really afford to give. They gave beyond what we really would have expected them to give.

We talked of the poor widow and how she gave everything — she gave of “her living.” (Mark 12:44) She gave sacrificially. Mark 14:3 is the account of another woman who gave. It is significant that the poor people were the ones who gave so freely. I do not know if it is significant that they were women who gave so freely or not, but this account again, is a woman. “And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.” This was a very precious box. I think from some other figuring they said it may have been worth close to a year’s wages. She poured it out to anoint the head of Jesus. We see sacrificial giving in this.

Another reason I think that the Bible is teaching us to give sacrificially is when we consider our Lord, and His example in how He gave. God “gave his only

begotten Son.” (John 3:16) That is giving. That is more than a tenth, is it not? In 2 Corinthians 8, where we have been reading, another verse of significance is verse 9. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” That is our example for giving — the riches of the Lord Jesus. He was willing to become poor for us.

I say I have yet to learn what it means to give sacrificially. When we think of the report of the money needing to be borrowed for our missions, I am not accusing anyone, but I would say that the resources to meet that debt, are within what we as a church could pay that debt off tomorrow if we really wanted to. Could we? Is that saying too much? I am not accusing, and I do not want anyone to feel like I am scolding anyone for it. No one is suffering. It is borrowed money. It is available. I think that is a difference. It is not like someone is going hungry, or cold because we have not given. However, I think that I personally feel much challenged in myself.

Someone has said that God’s plan for giving begins with the tithe simply as an acknowledge-

ment that it belongs to the Lord, and then we give of our abundance. We have much left over and we give of that to the Lord, and then we give in sacrifice yet. We give up some of the things that we would like to have. Some of the things maybe we should have. We forego those so that we can give to the Lord and to His work. I believe that is what the Bible would teach us to do.

5) *Next, God would have us to give willingly and cheerfully.* Here we can take the verse in 2 Corinthians 9:7, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” Someone has said that there are three kinds of givers — flint, sponge, and honeycomb.

We know how a piece of flint is? We can hit it, pound it, or bang it around, and all that we ever get off are some little pieces and some little chips. Some people are like that. We pry and prod around and we simply cannot get much from them. They are flint givers.

Some people are sponge givers. We know how a sponge is? When we squeeze a sponge, we can get something out of it. As a matter of fact, the harder we squeeze it, the more we get. If we put the squeeze on them, or

put on the pressure, we can get — they give.

Then, some people are like honeycomb. Honeycomb, if we scrape off the capping that is over the comb — the sweetness — the honey flows and runs out freely, and sweetly. Another person described it as three kinds of giving — grudge giving, duty giving, and thanksgiving. Grudge giving says, “I hate to do it. It hurts.” Duty giving says, “I have to, I feel this is my obligation.” And thanksgiving says, “I want to.” I believe that we as a group of people, are willing and glad to give. However, I also know that we are related to, and have some of the same blood in us that Achan had years ago when he saw those goods and desired them for himself. Somehow we see the money going away from us. It does not simply go away and forget it. It has its pull. We do well not to focus our attention on what we are giving up, but rather focus our attention on what we are keeping for ourselves. This might help us to be more cheerful and willing in the gifts that we give. We have so much left. Thank God for the abundance He has given.

6) *Another guideline is giving through the church.* I would take this from 1 Corinthians 16:2. “Upon the first day of the week

let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” I understand this to be a gathering that they took as a church upon the first day of the week, “let every one of you lay by him in store.” The Lord would have us give this way. Perhaps not everything we give must go through the Church, but it seems to me that should be the bulk of what we give. In Mark 12, when Jesus was observing that widow, she was throwing her money into the Treasury. That was at the Temple and that money was going through the Temple.

There is also a very familiar verse in Acts 4:35 when the various individuals were selling their goods and bringing them. “Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” They brought it to the apostles and laid it down at their feet. I would not say it is wrong for us to see a brother whom we recognize has some needs and we would like to help him to give him a gift, contribution, or help. However, as

their pattern here, I would rather recommend that a gift to our brother may go through the Church. Lay it down at the “apostles feet” and then they distribute it as they see the needs. If we have a contribution to give to a brother, I would suggest that you give it through the deacon. Give it to the deacon and then he could pass it on.

Do we brethren get any other calls for help these days? If we opened our mail today, we probably received a request for help. We get all kinds of pleas and requests for help. It gives us a sense of direction — what to do — if we give to the church. That is where our giving goes. There are some other causes that we may give to. Recently we received a request from an organization, and I thought it was an honourable organization. I thought it would be worthy of some help. As a matter of fact they send us a number of cards, and it was unusual in that they were very nice cards that I felt I could use. They asked for a contribution, so I gave them a small contribution. I thought that would cover the cost of the cards and some more. About two weeks later, I received another letter from the same organization. This time they sent me a little tablet and, if I recall correctly,

it was some stamps with my name and address on. I thought “Well, I tried to help them. Why did they not take the money and use it? Why did they need to turn around and send me something else?” I thought they were wasting the money that I had sent to them.

When we give money through the Church, it is 100% efficient. The Church does not send out some of that to advertise and try to get more. The deacon does not take a ‘cut’ out of it to try to cover his time and costs in handling the thing. One hundred percent of what we give goes to where we intend it. We know where it is going. It is going for a good work. Furthermore, what we give to the Church many times goes for spiritual ministries. I think it is simply the place where we ought to give a large part of our giving.

I might raise this question, “What should the church do with the offerings that come in?” I have heard it suggested already that too much of our money goes right back to us. We have our deacon fund offerings. We lift large amounts and what do we do with it? Well, we turn right around and pay our own bills. Yet, I noticed in the book of Acts, when these people sold their possessions and brought the money

and laid it down at the apostles feet they made distribution where there was need, and that was natural needs. When I noticed that I must admit that it made me feel a little better. I think it shows a pattern that we are not violating as we help one another. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

When the Bible talks about giving alms, we think of that as our giving, and that is giving our natural things to help people with their physical needs. I certainly think it is right that a portion of what we give goes to meet natural needs of those around us. We also want our giving to be given to spiritual causes. Our offerings go to support our mission work and other spiritual causes like that. That is certainly good. I would also like to remind us that 1 Corinthians 9 has a definite call to the support of the ministry. Some congregations lift offerings specifically for the ministry. There are numerous other ways too, which brethren can help. However, I believe that is a right way too, that God intends for our resources to be used.

7) *The Bible calls for us to give systematically.* We already read the verse, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay

by him in store.” We are orderly about this. This is not something haphazard where we give now, and maybe we will give after a while. We give regularly and there is a system to it. In our system, I would like to encourage that we give God His part first. I remember my father, when he would have his weeks wages (he would have his money) I still remember him taking out what he had designated for the Lord and setting that aside. I think that is the way that we should do. If we pay the bills first, and then see what is left, there probably will not be as much left. Let us give God His part first.

There is a story of the little girl who was given two dollars by her father. He specifically told her, “One of these dollars, you can do whatever you want to with, but the other one you shall put in the Sunday School offering.” She took the money and she was delighted. She was anxious to use her dollar and she got permission to go to the neighbouring store to buy herself some candy. On the way she tripped and fell and the one dollar bill slipped from her hands and got lost. It fell down through a storm sewer. The poor girl got up and she was left with one dollar. She looked it over and decided that the dollar that got away was the one that

was supposed to be given in the offering. The one that she still had yet was hers. I would say that is more than a story about a little girl. It is a story with implications for big men too. Let us give God His part first and then we work with what is left.

Also, let us keep a record. Be systematic in our system and keep a record. Records show some surprising things. People think they are doing this or that. Then, they start taking records about it, and records have amazed many people. If we do not know exactly what we are giving, very likely we are not giving what we think we are. Therefore, keep records.

8) Last of all, We give secretly and anonymously. You may turn to Matthew 6:1–4. Perhaps this is what you thought of, first of all, as one of the New Testament guidelines for giving. “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right

hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” Some congregations post the totals of their offerings each Sunday on a board in the back of the church. Is that anonymous? Is that giving in connection with this? “let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth?” I have no problem with a sign or poster like that. It would be an altogether different thing if we would post that out along the road so that the passers by could see what our morning offering was. Then, I think, it would be evidence that we are trying to impress people with what we have given. In this case people who have given are the ones who see. I do not consider that a violation of this principle. As a matter of fact, I think it is a safeguard that there is some kind of record or acknowledgment given.

I want to read again from 2 Corinthians 8. I am not sure that I understand all of this, but it seems to me what is being said here by Paul is that these brethren had the gift, the offering that was lifted was given to them and then they took another brother along with them, if I understand this correctly. “And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel

throughout all the churches; And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Corinthians 8:18–21). We trust each other. We trust those who count the money. I am sure that we trust our deacon brethren. Yet, there is an acknowledgement of how much was given. It gives a record that helps other people to know what was given and how matters stand.

The benefit sales of our day are a violation of this business of giving anonymously or giving secretly. People buy things. They pay big prices. It is going as contribution, so why do we not do it? We can pay a big price, but, others see. We do not care if others see when we give do we? “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). There is something within us that before we know it, it can catch us. One man shared with me recently that he was in a church service, while one brother was waiting for the offering basket to come, he was

holding a twenty-dollar bill. He did not have it folded up. It was his opinion that this man wanted to be seen with that twenty-dollar bill. Our hearts do funny things to us and we must be on guard that we do not get caught.

A twenty-dollar bill is not what it used to be. I would suggest that if we have a fifty-dollar bill to put in the offering that maybe we would do well to wrap it up inside a one dollar bill, so that it does not show at all as a big gift. If you use envelopes, it might be something to consider, rather than putting in a number of tens that you have on hand, and then making a big fat envelope, perhaps it would be good to get some bigger denomination bills. We can put large amounts of money in an envelope and it can be very thin. It can look very fat too sometimes depending on what we put inside it. Let us give in a way that it does not show what we are giving or that we are trying to give a lot.

New Testament giving does not desire to be noticed in what we give. What do we think of putting a cheque in the offering? I will not say a lot about that. I will point out in Acts 4, they brought their gifts and they laid them down at the apostle’s feet. Peter knew what Ananias gave. His condemnation of Ananias

was not because he gave like that, but rather it was because of his lying that was with it. The apostles knew what was being brought. I believe on the basis of that pattern it is not a violation if the deacon knows when a brother gives something or what he gave. If we have a gift to give to a brother and we give it to the deacon and ask him to pass it on, again the deacon will know what we have given. That is not a violation of what we read in Acts 4:35.

As far as giving through the deacon, I would like to say this. It gives an avenue that the recipient of a gift can return thanks for what he has received. I have received gifts. I remember one in particular. I found on my desk at school a large gift. I had no idea

(or I should say) I could only guess where it came from. It is more blessed to give than to receive. For the receiver there is a sense of satisfaction if he can thank the person who gave it. If we give through the deacon, it gives an avenue where the recipient can return thanks. It gives a sense of satisfaction to the receiver also. We want to give freely. We want to give willingly and abundantly and it is not a lost cause. There are many blessings in giving. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) Matthew also says "thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." May God bless each of us, and help each of us that we may freely give as we have received from the Lord.

Scripture References

Psalms		Mark		1 Corinthians	
34:8	26	12:44	33	9	37
34:9	27	14:3	33	16:2	31, 35
34:18	27				
		Luke		2 Corinthians	
Isaiah		14:18	29	8:1-7	28
5:20	27			8:2	33
		John		8:5	29
Jeremiah		3:16	34	8:9	34
15:16	27			8:12	33
17:9	39	Acts		8:18-21	39
		4:35	35, 40	9:7	34
Matthew		20:35	40		
6:1-4	38			Galatians	
23:23	31			6:10	37

From the Previous Issue:

Christian Leadership in the Home

From a message by Mahlon Petre

Renick Christian Fellowship

Renick, WV

Given at

Tennessee/Kentucky Life Conference Meetings May, 2004

Held At

Mt. Carmel Bible Fellowship

Flemingsburg, KY

Book Reprint (Continued)

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 38.

Noted Women of the Old Testament.

(Continued.)

III Jezebel.

1. Wife of Ahab, king of Israel. — 1 Kings 16:31.

2. Her influence over her husband. — 1 Kings 16:31–33;
21:25,26.

3. The hostess of many false prophets. — 1 Kings 18:19.

NOTE. — In Jezebel were found all the qualities necessary to make up a dangerous character. She was wealthy, brilliant, intelligent, hospital, resourceful, and desperately wicked. These qualities made her the center of a powerful and numerous faction which wrought more havoc in Israel than all previous reigns had done.

4. Swears vengeance on Elijah for destroying her prophets. — 1 Kings 19:2.

5. By intrigue she secures Naboth's vineyard for Ahab. — 1 Kings 21:5–15.

NOTE. — It is not hard to see that Jezebel was the real power in Israel, and that Ahab was a mere puppet in her hands. Still, this fact does not justify Ahab in his wickedness, as he had abundant evidence to know that he was confiding in the wrong power. Ahab is to be

censured, (1) for his alliance with a heathen woman, (2) for allowing her to rule him after he had married her, (3) for his wicked deeds, for which he was personally responsible.

6. Elijah's prophecy and its fulfillment. — 1 Kings 21:23; 2 Kings 9:30–37.

IV. Athaliah.

1. Daughter of Ahab, and the wife of Jehoram. — 2 Kings 8:18.

2. Usurps the throne and slays the royal seed. — 2 Kings 11:1; 2 Chronicles 22:10.

3. Joash saved by his aunt. — 2 Kings 11:2, 3; 2 Chronicles 22:11, 12.

4. Overthrown by order of Jehoiada. — 2 Kings 11:14–16; 2 Chronicles 23:1–15.

NOTE. — Like her mother, Athaliah seemed to triumph for a while, but finally met with a violent death. From the lives of these two women we learn, (1) what wonderful influence an intelligent woman may have, and (2) how desperately wicked a woman may be when moral restraints are discarded. The extremes of womanhood are presented by the two women mentioned in this lesson, and the little group of holy women who attended our Saviour in the hour of His trials.

V. The Shunammite.

NOTE. — No reference is made here to David's nurse, 1 Kings 1.

1. Hostess of Elisha. — 2 Kings 4:8.

2. Conveniences for Elisha. — 2 Kings 4:9–11.

3. A promise and its fulfillment. — 2 Kings 4:16, 17.

4. Sorrow in the family. — 2 Kings 4:18–21.

5. Her faith rewarded. — 2 Kings 4:25–37.

1. Of what nationality was Jezebel?

2. What reason is there for supposing that Ahab would have been less wicked but for her influence?

3. What was Athaliah's object in destroying all the royal seed?

Who was her most formidable enemy?

4. What threat of Jezebel's frightened Elijah?

5. Why did Gehazi not succeed? 2 Kings 4:31.

LESSON 39.

Elijah.

I. Nationality. — The Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead.” 1 Kings 17:1.

II. Prophecies and their fulfillment.

1. A great drought. — 1 Kings 17:1. — Fulfilled 1 Kings 18:2 (Luke 4:25; James 5:17).

2. Death of Ahab and Jezebel. — 1 Kings 21:19, 23. — Fulfilled, 1 Kings 22:38; 2 Kings 9:33, 36.

3. Death of Ahaziah. — 2 Kings 1:4, 16. — Fulfilled 2 Kings 1:17.

III. Thrilling events of his life.

1. Flight from the wrath of Ahab and Jezebel. — 1 Kings 17:1–8.

2. The miraculous preservation of his life. — 1 Kings 17:6–16.

3. Raising of the widow’s son. — 1 Kings 17:17–24.

4. Proving the power of God upon Mt. Carmel. — 1 Kings 18:17–40.

5. Flight to Beersheba. — 1 Kings 19:1–8.

6. God manifests Himself unto him — 1 Kings 19:9–15.

7. Ahab’s humiliation before him. — 1 Kings 21:27–29.

8. Ahaziah’s messengers consumed with fire from heaven. — 2 Kings 1:3–16.

9. The waters of Jordan divided. — 2 Kings 2:8.

10. Carried heavenward in a whirlwind. — 2 Kings 2:11, 12.

IV. Elijah and Elisha.

1. Elijah commanded to anoint Elisha his successor. — 1 Kings 19:16.

2. Anointing of Elisha. — 1 Kings 19:19–21.

3. Disappearance of Elijah. — 2 Kings 2:1–13.

V. Appears with Christ upon the Mount of Transfiguration. — Matthew 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30.

VI. Thoughts on his life.

1. Elijah has by common consent been considered the most picturesque character in the Bible. His origin is as mysterious as his end. He never appears in the sacred writings except in connection with some remarkable event. Save a few cases when he appears to have been in a despondent mood, his life is a continued triumph. His glorious disappearance from earth is a fitting climax to his career.

2. When Elijah was in his most despondent moods, and when the conviction had forced itself upon him that life was not worth the living, God announced to him His purpose of using him in mighty works. God uses us to best advantage when we are completely emptied of self. "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

3. When God manifested Himself to Elijah upon Mt. Horeb, the power was not in the great, strong wind, not in the mighty earthquake, not in the roaring fire; but in "the still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). Look for spiritual power, not in the man who by noise and boasting seeks to manifest to the world a "heart experience," but in the man who quietly trusts in his Saviour and simply clings to the cross.

4. Elijah, relying upon God for his support, met and overcame a whole multitude of false prophets. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

1. How was Elijah's faith tested at the brook Cherith?
2. Who was the widow whose son was raised by Elijah?
3. Were the prophets of Baal sincere? What lessons may we learn from them?
4. What lessons had Elijah for becoming despondent in his flight from the wrath of Jezebel? Was his despondency justifiable?
5. How did God console Elijah in his despondency? What lesson for us?

Children's Book Reprint (Continued)

THE PENNY TRACT

Revised and Reprinted © 2006

The young ladies had amused themselves some minutes with laughing at the old man and his tracts, when a miserable, ragged woman, carrying a sickly infant in her arms, presented herself at

the garden-gate, and began to ask alms in a whining and sorrowful voice. The young ladies were too much engaged with their own idle and merry conceits to observe this poor woman, who

opened the gate and came, up the gravel-walk towards the arbor. As soon as the sisters perceived her, they screamed as if they had been frightened, and then laughed at their own ridiculous fears. The poor woman, who was too much taken up by her own distresses to regard either the affected screams or the laughter of the young people, now renewed her entreaties for charity; upon which the elder lady tossed her sixpence, and the other, looking archly at her sister, held out the newly purchased tract to the beggar, saying, "There, take that home; it is to do you a vast deal of good; how much, I cannot tell you."

The poor woman received the little book as seriously as she supposed it had been offered to her, but said, "I cannot read, miss, more is the pity; but my husband is an extraordinary good scholar."

"Oh, then, that little book will be the very thing for him," said the giddy girl; "so, be sure to give it to him."

The poor woman, as I have before remarked, was by no means aware that these young ladies were jesting with her; but if she had been, it ought to have made no difference in her opinion of the value of the tract; for that which is good would remain

good still, though all the world were to unite in saying it is naught; and that which is evil would be evil still, though earth and hell were joined to say it is not so; therefore those will assuredly be confounded and brought to shame at last who call good evil, and evil good. (Isaiah 5:20) Now, this little book which the lady had put into the hand of the beggar was full of precious matter, and many rich quotations from the word of God. And as the prophet Elijah did not find the meat which the Lord sent him in the wilderness less acceptable because it was brought to him by the ravens rather than the doves, neither did this little volume lose aught of its real value by passing into the possession of the beggar through profane hands.

But to leave these reflections, and return to my story. The poor woman was so well pleased with what she had obtained from these ladies, that she made her best courtesy, and turned her steps towards her miserable home; but as she begged at the door of every house she passed by the way, it was towards evening before she reached her cottage. The dwelling of this poor woman was a house on the borders of a common*, which had been originally well built, was sufficiently roomy, and stood in a spacious

patch of ground, where several fruit-trees remained; but notwithstanding all those advantages, the idleness and vice of its present owner had rendered this place a scene of ruin and desolation. The garden had been so long neglected that it had become a wilderness; the broken windows were stuffed with rags; part of the chimney had fallen; the thatch was out of repair; and in short, every thing within and without this miserable habitation bespoke the poverty, slovenliness, and idleness of its inhabitants. The name of the man who possessed this tenement was Francis Downes, the husband of the poor beggar-woman before mentioned. He was an excellent workman when he chose to work, and pretended to make a living by cutting fruit-trees and jobbing about in different gardens; but these were only pretences; for what he gained in these honest ways was a mere trifle, while the greater part of his livelihood was in fact obtained by fishing and pilfering. This man, about four years before, had married a servant-maid in a farm-house. The woman was a poor, ignorant, simple woman, who might, in

good hands, have made a quiet, tidy wife; but she was by no means fit to have to do with such a man as Frank Downes.

This poor woman he had often reduced to the extremities of want: for as his gains were uncertain, his whole life was a round of feasts and fasts, days of riot and long periods of distress and penury**. Poor Mary Downes felt her misery, but did not know how to set about mending her situation, for she was ignorant of her duties as a good housewife or prudent mother; and it was not likely that she should acquire the knowledge of these duties with a man who kept her in a constant state of fear and distress of mind. With respect to religion, she knew about as much as was generally known by the lower orders of servants in farm-houses in England; and that, I am sorry to say, was generally little enough. Since her unhappy marriage, she had laid one of her little ones in its grave; and she was often much distressed by the sickly appearance of the child she carried in her arms; for though helpless and ignorant, she was a tender mother.

About a week before the time

* A tract of ground, the use of which does not belong to an individual, but belongs to the public or to a number of people, like a small park, or community garden.

** Want, or extreme poverty.

of which I am speaking, Francis Downes had sprained his ankle in one of his nightly excursions, and having been, in consequence, closely confined at home, and unable to work, he, had made the house appear to his wife more wretched than ever. They had also, at this time, been reduced to such distress — as they had no credit, and never could contrive to have a penny beforehand — that they had no resource left but to beg. The poor woman had suffered so much ever since her husband had been confined at home by his harsh and cruel usage, that

she was not sorry to get out of his way for a short time, though it were for the purpose of picking up a few pence or a little broken meat by begging; and being, as I have before remarked, extremely ignorant, and simple, she had no idea of the disgracefulness of endeavoring to remove her distress in this way. She had been begging several days in different directions with little success, but on the day of which we are now speaking she, was more fortunate, and returned home very well satisfied with what she had acquired.

FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

9. **Man, as God created him, was an intelligent, holy creature.**

The Bible leaves no room for “the cave man;” only as fallen man has in places degenerated into that kind of a creature. The evolutionist’s “We may reasonably suppose” is no match or substitute for a plain “Thus saith the Lord.” When Adam “gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field” (Genesis 2:20) he did something that no present-

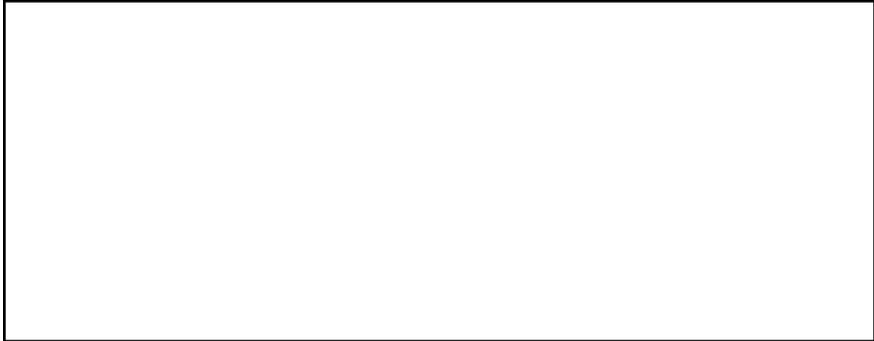
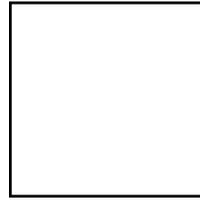
day naturalist is able to do. It requires a mighty stretch of the imagination to think of the evolutionist’s “primitive man” doing all the things that are attributed to Adam, the first man, in the second chapter of Genesis. But man’s intelligence was simply incidental to his lofty state spiritually — without sin, in fellowship with his Maker, knowing no death until the arch “angel of light” caused him to fall from his lofty, blissful, sinful state.

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