

BIBLICAL TRUTHS

Biblical offering

The Joy of Giving to God

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**EVERYTHING COMES FROM YOU,
AND WE HAVE GIVEN YOU
ONLY WHAT COMES FROM YOUR HAND.**

(1 Chronicles 29:14) NIV

BIBLICAL OFFERING

The Joy of Giving to God concerns every Christian.

'OFFERING', 'GIVING', are words marked out in the pages of the Bible.

These are actions which are part of our daily lives. We receive and we give; we give and we receive. Christian Life is not an exception to the rule. Money plays such a large part that it can either serve for our good and the benefit of God's work, or rule over us if we cling to it to the extent of becoming mean-spirited towards God.

We have become children of God by faith in Jesus-Christ, who was **given by God** out of love for us. Now, the Bible invites us to OFFER SOMETHING and GIVE out of love for Him and our neighbour.

BIBLICAL OFFERING has nothing to do with subscriptions to charities or fundraising for Non-Christian charitable work.

BIBLICAL OFFERING is given to GOD. It is set apart for Him to be used in accordance to the biblical instructions. Therefore, it is a privilege for every Christian living his faith to take part in it.

An in-depth study of the biblical texts is necessary to know **How much** we should be giving to be conformed to God's will and **How** we should give to please Him.

FROM THE ORIGIN OF HUMANITY, MEN HAVE BROUGHT THEIR OFFERING TO GOD

Abel and Cain, the two sons of Adam, built up an altar on which they put their gifts to God.

« Now Abel kept the flock and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time, Cain brought some of the fruit of the soil as an offering to the Lord.»

On the other hand, Abel brought his own offering:

- **fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.**

“The Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering; but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favour.” (Genesis. 4: 4-5)

Both of these brothers had the same intention but however, only Abel's offering had been looked upon with favour by God. This reveals that it is not enough to bring an offering to God but one must also learn to do it according to HIS will expressed in the Bible.

I am confident that you also wish to receive God's favourable look upon your offering. This is why I desire to help you by meditating the biblical texts which explain how to receive God's approval.

Every time, throughout the ages, mankind has looked for God's favour and protection.

In their ignorance, men made “idols” and “gods” for themselves and brought their offering to these.

When I was visiting the wonderful temple of Madurai, in the South of India, I observed the Hindus coming and going in and out of the dark sanctuary decorated with impressive pillars, as they were giving their offering to their bronze elephant headed “god” with multiple arms.

Young men walked swiftly, carrying fruit baskets which they gave to the Hindu priests to obtain the “god's” favours.

We, as “born again” and saved individuals committed to serve Jesus Christ, are no longer in the darkness like those who see GOD as distant and foreign.

We have in our hands: THE WORD OF GOD. It is a lamp unto our path and our desire is to be enlightened by it. Thus, we need to refer to it during our meditation so that we know its teaching about BIBLICAL OFFERING well.

Throughout the Bible, 3 distinct steps appear. Every one of them contains a very useful instruction to teach us how to GIVE our offering to God:

1 . Before the establishment of the law of Moses

2 . Under the Law of Moses

3 .Under the Covenant of Grace in the New Testament.

1. THE OFFERING BEFORE THE LAW

Abraham was a believer who had faith in the existence of a unique God. He was called by God to go to Israel. God promised him that this land would belong to his descendants who would then become a nation and bring a great blessing to the world.

After he left his country called Mesopotamia, as he was in the promised land Abraham met a man of God who was King as well as Priest of God Most High in the so-called valley of King MELCHIZEDEK. During this meeting, "Melchizedek blessed Abraham and Abraham gave him the tithe of everything." (Genesis 14: 19-20)

This custom of giving a tithe continued to be practised in Abraham's family for generations. Later on, his grand child Jacob made this promise to God: "of all that you give me I will give you a TENTH." (Genesis: 28:22)

Jacob's decision was purely voluntary. It was a commitment of his own to testify of his gratitude and faith to God. It had nothing to do with a law or an imposed custom but a principle that was considered as fair and normal. A principle expressed by David in his prayer when the people of Israel brought their voluntary offerings for the building of the Temple of Jerusalem.

« EVERYTHING COMES FROM YOU AND WE HAVE GIVEN YOU ONLY WHAT COMES FROM YOUR HAND ». (1 Chronicles 29:14)

2 THE OFFERING UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES

Among the different laws which Moses gave to the people on behalf of God while he led them into the wilderness of Sinai, we can point out this on the offering:

“BRING THE BEST OF THE FIRSTFRUITS OF YOUR SOIL TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD YOUR GOD.” (Exodus 23:19)

Thus, God was the first to be served but also the best served since he received the firstfruits and the best portion of these fruits.

Under the new covenant of Grace, we cannot do less than that. Most of the time, we make the excuse of not being under the law anymore to evade our responsibility, which is in fact, **a true blessing for whoever puts God first.**

Therefore, when we come back home from work, after earning our money, **the first thing to do** is to set apart the amount that is due to God and to put it aside in order to dedicate it to HIS WORK.

In the days of Moses, tithing was perceived as due to God since it was lawfully **HIS PORTION:**

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, **BELONGS TO THE LORD.**” (Leviticus 27:30)

It is for this reason that the prophet Malachi challenges the people of Israel in these words:

« WILL A MERE MORTAL ROB ME? YET YOU ROB ME. BUT YOU ASK, ‘HOW ARE WE ROBINING YOU?’ IN TITHES AND OFFERINGS. »
(Malachi 3 :8)

After this rebuke, the prophet calls upon the people of Israel by pronouncing this urgent order from God:

“BRING THE WHOLE TITHE INTO THE STOREHOUSE, THAT THERE MAY BE FOOD IN MY HOUSE.” (Malachi 3: 10/11)

All these exhortations to the people of Israel: a people chosen by God (Romans 11:1), are many lessons for our instruction. (1 Corinthians 10:6)

Giving to God is a serious matter. However, we often are neglectful. Either we forget to bring to God what we committed ourselves to giving Him by faith out of obedience to His word, or we do not give exactly what we promised because of life's necessities becoming more challenging when we need “to make ends meet.”

We do not intend to deceive God. Our desire is to be faithful and loyal to Him. Therefore, let us also allow the Word of God to teach us. It is good to constantly let ourselves be instructed by it so that we do not forget what we ought to do to please God.

3. THE OFFERING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Just like the people of Israel brought their tithes and offerings before Jesus-Christ's coming, the Christian is also invited to set apart a portion of his belongings to God.

Since we are now living under the covenant of grace, we ask ourselves if this portion required by God in the Old Testament relates to us as Christians.

To know if the example of the people of Israel must be followed by the Church of Jesus Christ, we have to refer to the teaching given in the New Testament.

GIVING ACCORDING TO ONE'S MEANS

“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.” (1 Corinthians 16:2)

These were the directives given by the apostle Paul to all the churches in Galatia concerning a collection for the Christians of Jerusalem who needed be helped in a season of famine. Paul and Barnabas, the apostles were requested to give these offerings to the elders of the Church of Jerusalem. (Acts 11: 27/30)

Paul's instruction to the churches does not refer to tithing but insists on:

- 1 . Possibilities : **WHAT YOU'RE ABLE TO DO**
- 2 .Prosperity : according to one's means (Acts 11 :29) and even beyond one's abilities (2 Corinthians 8 :3).

I often heard Christians saying: “If only I had THE MEANS, if I had money, if I was WEALTHY, I would give a BIG offering for God's work.” We are ready to give what we don't have or tend to judge the individual who has more than us and yet we do not give according to what we think.

The Bible invites us to give WHAT WE CAN. The small offering that we bring is better than the speculative words of our imagination: “If I had more, I would give a lot.”

In the days of Paul, some Christians must have made the same statement as some of our Christians today and must have found themselves some excuses for not giving just as this text indicates:

“For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to WHAT ONE HAS, not according to what one DOES NOT HAVE.” (2 Corinthians 8:12)

This why the apostle stresses these two points :

“Let anyone set apart

1° what he can

2° according to his/ her prosperity” (his/her means)

The quantity is therefore not the most important. **What is essential is the proportion of what we give in comparison to what we have.**

THE PRIVILEGE OF GIVING

Even in the midst of poverty, it is possible to take part in the offering just like the apostle Paul mentioned about the Christians of Macedonia who generously gave for the collection towards the Christians of Jerusalem:

“In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and **THEIR EXTREME POVERTY** welled up in **RICH** generosity. For I testify that they gave **AS MUCH AS THEY WERE ABLE**, and **EVEN BEYOND their ability**. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for **THE PRIVILEGE** of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people.” (2 Corinthians 8: 2/4).

Thus, even the poorest individual considered his contribution to the offering to be a **PRIVILEGE**.

In fact, it is a privilege to give to God. The Bible teaches us to do so and experience proves that there is a source of blessing in practising the principle of offering to God faithfully.

At the beginning of the Gypsy revival in France, I did not dare ask the Gypsy Christians to give their offerings to prevent them from thinking we were after their money.

I adopted the same attitude towards them as the apostle Paul towards the Corinthians. He wrote to them: “what I want is not your possessions but you.” (2 Corinthians 12:14).

Then, one day, during a big gathering, we asked them to contribute to the expenses of God’s work. They did it with joy and enthusiasm.

Since then, they not only learnt to give but learnt that giving to God is normal in Christian life. If the pastor in charge of leading the meeting forgets about the offering, there is always a brother to remind Him of his oversight.

The person who is responsible for announcing the moment of taking up the offering has been taught not to announce this anymore: “this most sensitive task is my duty, it bothers me to do it, but I have to do it; we are going to walk down the aisles to take up your offering.” Now that we know it is a joy to give to God and a privilege to be taking part in his work, the moment of taking up offering is like what the apostle says: “also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:12).

A LIFE EXPERIENCE WITH THE DESTITUTE CHRISTIANS OF INDIA

A few years ago, while I was in India for mission, we organised a convention with Christians of the Narikoravas' tribe. It was one of the poorest tribe in India. During the three days of the convention, we offered them three daily meals with Indian-style rice for free.

When the service was about to start, I suggested to the Indian preachers we should ask the Christians for an offering. They were shocked and surprised. In fact, how was it possible to ask for an offering from people who were that poor? I explained to them that giving to God was a great privilege and a privilege that was not only for the rich individuals. We did not have the right to deprive them from the joy of giving to God. We then took up the offering and everyone gave something. When the collection was finished, I saw in the basket: some small coins worth one , two or five cents then I saw some safety pins, necklaces, even foxes' teeth, and goods that women used to sell from village to village". The total of the offering was about 10,50 € for an attendance of 400 individuals. They were all happy to have contributed and we gave thanks to God for that.

The value of the offering was not in the amount given in itself but rather in the act of devotion.

WHAT IS SUPERFLUOUS AND WHAT IS ESSENTIAL

The Gospel tells us that one day Jesus watched those who put their gifts into the treasury box of the Temple of Jerusalem.

“And He sat down OPPOSITE THE TREASURY, and began observing HOW the people were putting money into the treasury;

and many rich people were putting in LARGE SUMS.

A POOR widow came and put in TWO SMALL COPPER COINS, which amount to a cent.

Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them,

“Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in MORE than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of THEIR SURPLUS, but she, out of her poverty, put in ALL SHE OWNED, all she had to live on.” (NASB version) (Mark 12: 41/44)

WHAT WE GIVE AND WHAT WE KEEP FOR OURSELVES

« The question is not how much of my money I give to God, but rather how much of God's money I keep for myself.”

Such was the motto of this famous Christian businessman called Robert G Letourneau. A motto framed and hung by him in his office. On his desk, the following text appeared: “Jesus never fails”.

After meeting many difficulties at the beginning of his career, He ventured into a life of faith in God's intervention. He decided to deduct a tenth of the profits made by his company for God's work. He took this habit of putting this portion of God aside before he could even pay for the operating costs of his factories.

He stated that God had started to prosper his business once he gave his offering to Him.

His life and testimony have been a blessing for so many.

Therefore, everyone is called to take the offering given to God seriously.

When Jesus talked about the widow who gave what was essential, He mainly emphasized on the heart attitude that needs to go with the gift.

TITHING

The basis for our offering calculation

To conclude, we can admit that the **tithing** applied in the days of Abraham and the days of the Israelites under the Mosaic Law, serves as a **BASE** or a **MODEL** to our calculation of the offering due to God. However, one can state that this proportion which could be a sacrifice for some is not for others as long as it is not increased.

If we then can give more than the tithe and give extra offerings to God according to our prosperity, let us learn to do it with joy for HIS WORK.

By acting like this, our offering will become like the apostle Paul said : « A FRAGRANT OFFERING, AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE, PLEASING TO GOD. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.» (Philippians 4 :18/19).

In this respect, let's remember this statement of King David :

“I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.” (1 Chronicles 21:24)

And Jacob's statement:

“and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.” (Genesis 28:22)

LEARNING TO GIVE METHODICALLY

“ each one of you should **set aside** a sum of money in keeping with your income” (1 Cor 16:2). The apostle Paul recommends to **SET ASIDE**. This means that whatever we put aside for God should not be touched. It is God's portion. It belongs to Him. It is HIS WORK.

One day, a brother told me: “ I opened up a bank account especially dedicated to the deposit of my tithing, in this way I don't use it for my personal needs, it is set aside for God.”

Some people put God's portion in their money box on a daily basis. They are workers at the market and every day when they come back from work, they calculate the

amount that is due to God and put it aside in their home in a money box dedicated to His work.

Others withdraw their tithe and give it afterwards for the needs of God's work as soon as they receive their monthly salary.

Thus everyone can use a different method but what is important is **TO SET ASIDE** what we can for God, whether it is at home, in the bank, or in a saving account.

Once God's portion is set aside, it is devoted to him and we do not have the right to take it back for our personal needs.

“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”

During one of his trips, the apostle Paul meets with the Christians of the Church of Troas in Turkey and breaks the bread. It was the first day of the week that is to say on Sunday. (Acts 20:7)

Since they are now accustomed to taking communion on the first day of the week, in remembrance of the death and resurrection of the Lord, Christians also give their offering on the same day during the service.

Abraham is an example of this. He gave his tithe to the Priest Melchizedek after He (Melchizedek) brought out some BREAD and WINE. (Genesis 14: 17-20)

It is therefore biblical to devote your offering to God every first day of the week and to bring it regularly to the worship service.

It is good to be methodical in our offering and to keep on doing good like the Bible exhorts us to do so:

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“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest **IF WE DO NOT GIVE UP.**” (Galatians 6:9)

LEARNING TO GIVE SPONTANEOUSLY TO MEET SPECIFIC NEEDS

There are sometimes urgent needs in God's work. We are invited to respond to it.

The apostle Paul defended the preachers ZENAS and APOLLOS in front of his companion TITUS. He asked him to express his love towards these men of God by providing everything they needed for their trip:

“Do everything you can to **HELP** Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have **EVERYTHING THEY NEED.**” (Titus 3:13)

Therefore, the Bible teaches us to respond to calls for help concerning all the needs in God's work. Nowadays, these needs are numerous: evangelization, missionary support, and help to the Eastern Brothers, outreach for the drug addicts, spreading of the Gospel through literature and radio... and so many other Christian works.

“Our people (Christians) must learn to devote themselves to **DOING** what is good, in order **TO PROVIDE FOR URGENT NEEDS** and not live unproductive lives.” (Titus 3:14)

THE POWER OF MONEY

Everybody knows that the power of money is a double-edged weapon. It can either be used for good or bad. With money one can build schools, hospitals, houses, orphanages, fight against hunger and relieve misery...

With money one can also produce lethal weaponry: machine guns, tanks, atomic bombs, etc...

When I was invited to preach in an « Assembly of God » in Las Vegas in the United States, I was struck at the sight of all the streets enlightened by neon signs advertising places of debauchery. "Slot machines" are widespread. Money is spent in gambling with passion. It is not necessary to go that far to see men wasting their money in unhealthy pleasures.

Is it not common to see bars where people get drunk and cinemas displaying shocking posters of films exploiting sin, in towns and villages?

How many enormous amounts have been wasted in the world for bad things to satisfy people's passions and for the works of darkness?

We, believers are invited by God to invest some of our money into his service for the happiness of others and use this power to make his NAME, LOVE and WORD known to every man. This is why the Bible encourages us to be:

RICH FOR GOD

Unfortunately, we are not always like this because we sometimes cling to money to the point of being tight-fisted towards God.

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." (1 Timothy 6:10). It is not written that "**money**" is the root of all kinds of evil, but rather "**THE LOVE OF MONEY**".

The desire of becoming richer in an honest way, of improving our financial situation as well as our comfort does not contradict the Bible...

It is the pursuit of money for the sake of owning it without caring about others which represents a source of multiple worries. This is particularly true when money becomes a master. (1 Timothy 6:10)

Therefore, it is possible to be wealthy with earthly possessions **and rich for God** at the same time.

Hence this biblical piece of advice to those who are well off:

"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share." (1 Timothy 6: 17/19)

In Luc's gospel Jesus Christ told the parable of the rich man who only cared about himself and forgot to be generous. He wrongly believed that earthly life and wealth were eternal.

Jesus said : “ The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but **is not RICH TOWARD GOD.**” (Luke 12: 16-21)

THE NEED OF MONEY

We must not live for money but “Keep our lives free from the love of money” (Hebrews 13:5). However, we cannot live without it. We need to earn some in order to eat, dress ourselves, have an accommodation, pay our taxes, etc...

The Bible wants us to “prosper and be in good health, just as ‘our’ soul prospers” (3 John 1/2 NASB) “And God is able to bless ‘us’ abundantly, so that in all things at all times, **having all that ‘we’ need**, ‘we’ will abound in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:8)

Money is a necessity for us, for our family and for God’s work.

Oftentimes in the world the power of money is used for evil. Why not use this power for God’s service? The richer we are towards God then the more we give the Church opportunities to fulfil the divine mandate.

HOW TO GIVE TO BE APPROVED BY GOD

It is not enough to give some of your money to God according to your means but we must also learn to give it according to the biblical instructions.

Biblical offering is not only a matter of giving money but of giving in a way which pleases God.

According to the Bible, here is the way we should bring our offering to the Lord:

- **With joy** (2 Corinthians 9 :7)

“For God loves a cheerful giver.”

When the people of Israël brought their offering for the building of “God’s house”, **they rejoiced** because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the Lord with a whole heart, and King David also **rejoiced greatly.**” (1 Chronicles 29:9 NASB)

- **With a good heart** (2 Corinthians 9 :7)

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give.”

When Moses was on the mountain, God told him: “Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take MY offering.” (New King James Version)

It is better to give a little bit willingly with our heart than giving much with regrets.

- **With zeal** (2 Corinthians 8:7 and 9 :2)

Paul praises the Christians who took part in the collection and were eager to give. Here is an example to follow...

- **With care** (2 Corinthians 8 :20)

“taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;” (NASB)

On that occasion, the brothers had been asked to gather the offerings and to bring them to the poor of Jerusalem. It is with great awareness and earnestness that the apostles collected them.

- **With willingness** (2 Corinthians 9 :2 and 8 :12)

“For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable...”

Christians are called to give spontaneously without being constrained.

However, sometimes some people are give grudgingly since they do not understand the joy of giving to God.

- **With discretion** (Matthew 6 :3)

“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, [...]. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

It is always good to remember that God sees us. And his approval is all that counts.

Although giving alms and helping the poor has to be differentiated from the portion you set aside for God's work, there is a great lesson in Jesus' advice:

EVERYTHING THAT WE DO to help our neighbour or to take part in the life and growth of Christ's Church has to be granted selflessly with the conviction that GOD SEES US AND APPROVES US.

- **Without sorrow** (2 Corinthians 9 :7 Amplified Bible)

“Let each one [give] **not sorrowfully**...”

I sometimes heard preachers announcing the offering moment as if it was an unpleasant action for them. Why are we letting people believe that it is an arduous task since **God loves whoever gives with joy?**

- **Without compulsion** (2 Corinthians 9 :7)

“not to give **reluctantly** or **under compulsion**.”

Biblical offering should not be considered as a painful obligation, but as a **pleasing duty**. Those who do not wish to give to God are free not to do so.

While they do not give, they prevent themselves from putting into practice God's will regarding the principle of offering.

Biblical offering is and should remain a **voluntary gift**, offered willingly with a cheerful heart.

Paul the Apostle said about the Macedonian Church:

« For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were freely willing*,” (2 Corinthians 8:3, New King James Version)

- **Without Avarice or covetousness** (2 Corinthians 9 :5 NASB)

“So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not **affected by covetousness**.”

A “bountiful gift” is something that we give spontaneously (2 Corinthians 9:11/13) and as a matter of fact, generously.

Once upon a time, a brother had been earning a lot of money in one week. He made some good profits while running his business of metal trading. It brought in the nice amount of 4573 € but he had so many things to buy for himself that God's portion had been eaten up by all these purchases.

That's how one can become rich for oneself and mean towards God.

Sometimes, some Christians know which portion is God's but when comes the time of collecting the offering; they give such a modest coin that they display their meanness.

They are generous for themselves but not for God.
May God help us not to behave like that.

- **With Truth** (John 4 :23)

The Lord Jesus told us to worship God 'in Spirit and Truth'.

Our offering is also an expression of our worship.

Remember the Magi who brought gold to the Lord when they came to worship Him in Bethlehem. Their offerings allowed Joseph to take Jesus to Egypt and avoid Herod's anger. We must know that God approves our offering just like he did for the Magi's or Abel's offering if we bring it to Him:

1° *In Truth*, that is to say proportionally to our prosperity, according to our means and without cheating but giving God his portion generously.

.2° *In Spirit*, that is to say with joy, a good heart, freedom, with liberality, care, happiness, gratitude like an expression of our love for God.

LET US NOT LISTEN TO CRITICISM BUT TO WHAT GOD SAYS IN HIS WORD

Many times, I heard criticism from brothers who reckoned that we should not mention about the needs in God's work during the meeting, they argued against the fact that it could shock new converts.

Some others referred to the necessity for the believer to walk by faith. They used to say: "It's not necessary to ask for offerings, we better put our trust in God who will provide."

It is true that God is sovereign and almighty. "The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty." (Haggai 2:8) He is not limited in his power and possesses unusual and miraculous means to provide for his children and the Church's needs.

Did he not command the ravens to feed Elijah and they brought him meat and bread, every single morning and evening? (1 Kings 17:4/5)

Did Jesus himself not tell to Peter: “go to the sea, throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give to them for you and Me.” (Matthew 17:27 NASB)

That’s the way Jesus paid his tax! Did He not change the water into wine and multiply 5 loaves of bread to feed 5,000 men!

This faith in God whose name is “JEHOVAH-JIRAH” which means “The Lord who provides” does not exclude the fact that in His Word, God invites his children to give their offering. Encouragements to take part in it are numerous in the Word of God. God’s desire is to use his children to provide for the needs of his Church. It is the usual way taught by the Bible however it does not exclude potential miraculous interventions of God in his sovereignty. He offers the grace to take part in his work and be co-workers with Him to his children. (1 Corinthians 3:9)

Since God tells us to bring Him our offerings (Malachi 3:10), why don’t we teach it and obey what God says in HIS word?

As I attended a national convention gathering a few thousands of Christians, I introduced this biblical topic for one hour under the big tent.

The message was broadcasted all around the camp by the loud speakers so that those who had remained in their camping area could hear it.

Among them, there were a few brothers who had been criticising for a long time the taking up of offering at the beginning of meetings and had stayed at home.

They were forced to listen to the Bible Study and had been deeply touched in their heart. They understood that they were wrong since the principle of offering was BIBLICAL. They did not want to GO AGAINST WHAT WAS BIBLICAL so eventually they came to contribute to the financial needs of God’s work by bringing a generous offering under the big tent. They were filled with joy and satisfaction for having obeyed to the Lord.

Let us not listen to criticisms coming from those who moan and hinder God’s work but let us rather listen to WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS.

Since offering is BIBLICAL, let us remain biblical and consider the grace given by God to take part in HIS WORK as a privilege.

THE NEEDS OF GOD’S WORK

The Christian who is committed in his faith and serving Christ, knows that His Church cannot operate without money. But He also acknowledges that one must not give to anyone or to anything.

This is why it is good to refer to the Bible so that we should know what is told about the right use of the offering. In the Holy Scriptures, it seems like the **MAIN OBJECTIVE** is:

1. – GLOBAL EVANGELIZATION

Christ's command concerning evangelization is precise. Did he not say: 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.' (Mark 16:15) and 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,' (Matthew 28:19).

Going and preaching the Gospel into the whole world to every nation, costs money.

When Paul the Apostle was busy in his mission trips, he sometimes had to work with his hands to provide for his needs and the needs of his fellow workers by making tents. (Acts 18:3)

However, when he received financial help from churches, he could then devote himself exclusively to the preaching of the Word. (Acts 18:5)

He testifies himself by these words in his epistles:

"For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need." (Philippians 4:16)

"The brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed." (2 Corinthians 11:9)

By giving a financial support to the workers sent to Mission, we 'take part in the Gospel' (Philippians 1:5)

The Bible even exhorts us to contribute towards the travelling expenses of ministers going overseas to preach Jesus-Christ's Gospel: "Please continue providing for such teachers **in a manner that pleases God**. For they are travelling for the Lord, and they accept nothing from people who are not believers. So we ourselves should support them so that we can **be their partners** as they teach the truth."

(3 John 1:6/8 New Living Translation)

2. CHURCH LIFE

When a new church and community forms as a result of evangelization, new needs arise. In fact, a shepherd becomes necessary to feed the Lord's flock and lead the sheep into biblical truth.

Every sheep is then invited to share in the support of her shepherd, in accordance to what the Bible teaches in 1 Corinthians 9 : 13/14 “Don’t you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.” Thus, it is biblical to provide for the pastor’s needs.

On one hand, one can understand that wisdom has to guide Christians in their generosity. But also one must not go from one extreme to another.

I remember that at the beginning of the Pentecostal Revival in France, people thought that the pastor had to be an example of self-denial and as a consequence earn a starvation wage.

On the contrary, in the United States, Christians believe that their pastors should have a decent salary which will enable them to live in a comfortable place, bring their children up properly, without, however, crossing the boundaries of wealth.

American Christians are happy and proud to see their pastors not lacking anything without necessarily neglecting the other needs of the Church.

When considering the text of Galatians 6:6 “Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.”, it becomes obvious that one has to make his belongings available for God’s work.

A couple of years ago, a brother I had baptized twenty years earlier told me:

“I am now retired. I am not very healthy. I have a beautiful estate as well as other possessions. And I don’t have any heir. I intend to make my will and give my possessions for God’s work.” This was a decision in accordance to the Bible teaching. Unfortunately, this brother died before he had been able to make his will and his assets did not serve God’s cause following his desires.

I have known a sister in Christ who was also elderly. She made her will on a sheet of plain paper. Since she did not have any heir, she decided to bequeath her saving account for God’s work. Regrettably, she did not ask for advice when she wrote down this text: “I hand down my saving account to the pastor M... for his church.” This text was not valid according to the law and a solicitor had to enforce it.

This resulted in extremely costly procedures withholding a big part of the amount bequeathed for the Lord.

Thus, if someone has possessions he wants to make available for God’s service, then it is good to get some advice from qualified people so that his last desires should be fulfilled. Making arrangements for the giving of our possessions to God’s work does not quicken our death time. However, we must be realistic for it is obvious that our earthly life is only a passage and our destiny is in God’s hand.

Of course, it’s a good thing to hope for God’s hurried return and our rapture together with Him in the air. Anyway, we will not take anything with us, that’s why we think about his work in this world.

3. HELPING THE POOR

Church is not a charity work however it cannot be indifferent to human distresses and sufferings.

The bible invites Christians to “do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (Galatians 6:10)

The apostles, following the instructions of their Master, recommended the churches to continue remembering the poor. (Galatians 2:10)

While I was In India, in a village, a head man begged me to help him out: “We can only give our children one meal of rice per day” he said, “Can you help us to give them a second one?” Faced with this distress, my heart was deeply moved. When I returned to France, I shared this with Christian brothers and sisters.

Then I decided to build boarding houses to accommodate small children victims of starvation. And I talked about my projects to Christians who offered to take part in this 'children rescue'. Now, we have built 6 houses accommodating 300 children who are then well taken care of, fed properly and taught in the faith in Jesus; thanks to 300 families who are sponsoring these children by sending out monthly the cost of their boarding.

In addition to this assistance to the poor we created another 12 schools allowing 600 children to receive education and the knowledge of the Gospel.

Quite a lot of social works either in India, Africa or somewhere else have been initiated by evangelical churches, and all of these works are done in accordance with the Gospel instructions: “All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.” (Galatians 2:10)

“For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord’s people in Jerusalem.” (Romans 15:26)

Despite the laudable side of this fraternal solidarity towards our underprivileged brothers in the world, we must not forget that **priority should be given to the preaching of the Gospel.**

4. URGENT NEEDS

The needs for God’s work are numerous: rental and maintenance of the meetings' venues, purchase of a worship place, of evangelism tents, of cars and devices which are necessary in our modern society to spread out the Gospel, etc.

Money is essential in order to meet all these needs. It is normal and biblical for the Christian to be asked to give his contribution just like the Scriptures say:

“Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for **urgent needs** and not live unproductive lives.” (Titus 3:14)

GIVING TO GOD

It is : A JOY A GRACE A SOURCE OF BLESSING

Giving to God, is A GRACE, a privilege for the poor as well as for the rich.
But we DO NOT GIVE TO RECEIVE FAVOURS.

We do not give to earn a place to heaven because “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is THE GIFT OF GOD.” (Ephesians 2:8)

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

We do not give to be healed because we are healed BY FAITH IN THE NAME OF JESUS. (Acts 3:16)

We do not give to have our prayers answered for Jesus promised: “And I WILL DO WHATEVER you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13)

WE GIVE OUT OF LOVE FOR GOD

However **promises of blessing** are linked to the offering we give to God:

“Each of you should give [...] And GOD IS ABLE TO BLESS YOU ABUNDANTLY.” (2 Corinthians 9:7/8)

“Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:4)

In Malachi 3 : 10, there is a promise for the PEOPLE OF GOD : “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the

LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”

In this biblical text, everyone is invited personally to give his tithe for God and His work, no one should avoid it because offering belongs to God just like David says: “Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” (1 Chronicles 19:14)

One day a Christian was visiting a paper factory owned by one of his friends. During the conversation they had next to the machines, the Christian asked his friend he had not seen for years:
“I knew you when you were living in poverty and now here you are so rich. Could tell me what is the secret of your successful business?”

« I would not be able to tell you really”, the manufacturer answered. “When I was sixteen, I started to run my own business. At that time, I used to earn 2000 francs per month while having board and lodging. I promised God that I would give the tenth of this amount that is to say 200 francs and I kept my word. Since then, I never stopped applying this rule and surprisingly, all my wages and profits increased continuously. If the secret of my successes is found somewhere, it must be there. Those who desire to try it will experience the same thing as me.

If everyone takes part in biblical offering, then the Church of our Lord will not experience drought. For this to become a reality, God challenges his people by saying: “ Test me in this”. God promises to open up the floodgates of heaven and to pour out his blessing in abundance to encourage his people.

Let us put into practice his Word: “Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;” (Proverbs 3:9) and let us remember what the Lord said:

“IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.’ ”

(Acts 20 : 35)

May **the Joy of giving to God** be also your joy from now on!

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