

# WHEN TO GIVE, WHEN TO TAKE

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The title refers to two of the five items of corporate worship as identified in the New Testament. The five items, channels, or avenues of worship presented in the New Testament are preaching (II Tim. 4:2), praying (I Thess. 5:17-18), singing (Eph. 5:19), observing the Lord's supper (I Cor. 11:20-34), and the collection (I Cor. 16:1-2). While all five constitute the worship of the church, the collection and the Lord's supper are limited in their observance as to time. The church always assembles on the first day of the week to worship God, and the church may assemble at other times throughout the week for worship, but only upon the first day of the week does the New Testament authorize giving proportionately as prospered and taking the Lord's supper as instructed (cf. Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:25).

## **When to Give**

The churches at Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium in Galatia of Asia Minor and the church at Corinth in Achaia were ordered by apostolic command to contribute into the collection each first day of the week. Paul wrote, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 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 Cor. 16:1-2). The time sensitive phrase in English is:

*Upon the first day of the week.*

The phrase in the Greek from which the translation was made is:

*kata mian sabbatou.*

The lexicon of Arndt and Gingrich gives the meaning of this specific Greek phrase to be "every Sunday."<sup>1</sup> The lexicon prepared by Barclay M. Newman, Jr. says of this particular phrase that it means "on the first day of every week, every Sunday."<sup>2</sup>

So, when to give according to the Bible is "every Sunday" or "upon the first day of the week." Please, bear in mind that no other time is authorized by God for the congregation to give of their means in the worship of God.

## **When To Take**

The second time sensitive command of worship concerns the taking of the Lord's supper. In the language of "breaking bread" where the observance of the Lord's supper is meant, the church at Troas under the immediate supervision of the inspired apostle Paul took the Lord's supper, and the Bible tells when they took it. Luke wrote, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7). The American Standard Version of 1901 also says they took it "upon the first day of the week." The phrase which relates to the time of the observance is:

***Upon the first day of the week.***

The phrase in the Greek from which the translation was made is:

***mia ton sabbaton.***

The forty-seven translators of the King James Version and the 101 translators of the American Standard Version rendered the Greek phrase the same in English in Acts 20:7 as in I Corinthians 16:1-2: "Upon the first day of the week."

### **An Insightful Comparison**

Since the biblical language on the subject of when to give and when to take is the same, the practice should correspond in regard to time. Yet, the practice of taking up a collection every time there is a church meeting and taking the communion only on special occasions and during certain times of the year even taking it on Thursday night has become routine among some. When to take by Divine instruction is "upon the first day of the week;" when to give by Divine instruction is "upon the first day of the week." Honoring the time of observance is critical to accomplishing the purpose and fulfilling the design intended by these items of worship. Dishonoring the time of the observance renders the effort "vain worship" (Matt. 15:9).

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. The worship of God proceeds through what five channels?
2. Which two are "time sensitive"?
3. Name the four specific congregations mentioned by the apostle Paul as being in receipt of the command from him to give of their means every Sunday?

4. What is the English phrase used by inspiration to designate both when to give and when to take?
5. Does the voice of Greek scholarship support the view that the observances under discussion should take place every week?
6. Why is the collection taken often by some religious groups and the communion taken infrequently?
7. Discuss the argument sometimes made about the possibility of taking the Lord's supper for granted if routinely taken.
8. If the Lord's supper is not taken weekly because it may become mundane, then what is there about the collection and the biblical directives concerning its correct observance that make it exempt from becoming mundane?

#### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup>William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 746.

<sup>2</sup>Barclay M. Newman, Jr., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 160