

# Serving The Lord With Gladness



## Going To Church And Enjoying It More!

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# **Serving The Lord With Gladness**

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# Serving The Lord With Gladness

## Getting More Out Of The Assemblies

### INTRODUCTION

1. David, “a man after God’s own heart” (**Ac 13:22**), loved to worship God...
  - a. He was glad when asked to go to the house of the Lord - **Psa 122:1**
  - b. He called upon others to serve the Lord with gladness - **Psa 100:2**
2. Many who go to church seem not to enjoy it much...
  - a. Some sit with disinterested or bored looks on their faces
  - b. Others make the effort to attend, but appear to receive little benefit by their presence
  - c. Those who lead singing or who preach often notice the lack of ‘gladness’
  - d. Visitors often notice it as well
3. Having witnessed such myself, I have often wondered...
  - a. Do such people not know the Lord?
  - b. Do they not find joy and gladness in serving the Lord?
  - c. Are they not encouraged when they assemble with their brethren?
  - d. How can we help them get more out of coming to church?
4. I find opportunities to worship the Lord a source of great encouragement...
  - a. I am drawn closer to God, I am encouraged by my brethren
  - b. I wish others would experience the same blessings

[To encourage people to get more out going to church, we begin a series of studies entitled “**Serving The Lord With Gladness**”. This first study deals with the general idea of assembling together...]

### I. THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE CHURCH

#### **A. AN IMPORTANT DUTY...**

1. That we might exhort one another - **He 10:24-25**
    - a. We worship God when we come together
    - b. But an important element is our mutual edification
  2. That we might keep one another saved - **He 3:12-14**
    - a. There is the danger of becoming hardened by sin, departing from God
    - b. The antidote to apostasy is frequent exhortation
- **One of the first symptoms of apostasy is irregular assembling with other Christians**

#### **B. WITH MANY OPPORTUNITIES...**

1. The assembly on first day of the week - **Ac 20:7; 1 Co 16:1-2**
  - a. We have the opportunity to assemble weekly
  - b. To break bread (the Lord’s Supper), along with other activities (prayer, singing, etc.)
2. Bible studies - **Ac 2:42; 2 Ti 2:2**

- a. We have the opportunity to attend Bible classes
  - b. We can often attend home Bible studies
  3. Gospel meetings - **Ac 19:9; 2 Ti 4:2**
    - a. Conducted by churches in other places
    - b. The purpose is both to evangelize the lost and edify the saved
    - c. They provide wonderful opportunities to learn and develop ties with brethren
- **The opportunities to serve the Lord with gladness are indeed many!**

[Yet attending such assemblies is not high on many people's list of priorities. Evidently they do not get much out of them. If such is the case with you, here are some thoughts on...]

## **II. GETTING MORE OUT OF OUR ASSEMBLIES**

### **A. PREPARATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE...**

1. We get out of something what we put into it
    - a. This is true with any endeavor in life
    - b. Even what seems most boring can become interesting with the right preparation
  2. Preparation beforehand makes a big difference in what we get out of going to church
    - a. Such as praying and meditating upon what we are going to do
    - b. Planning what **we** can do to make the assembly more edifying (e.g., welcoming and visiting others)
    - c. Come to serve, not to be served (though we will be blessed in return - cf. **Ac 20:35**)
  3. Preparation often begins the night before, especially for the Lord's day
    - a. Getting a good night's sleep
    - b. Planning on getting up early enough to have time to dress and leave on time
    - c. Planning to leave with enough time to arrive early
- **A little extra effort in preparation can make quite a difference**

### **B. BE MINDFUL OF THOSE PRESENT...**

1. **Our brethren in Christ**
    - a. People like you, who appreciate the presence and encouragement of other Christians
    - b. So take the time to visit with them before and after the assembly
      - 1) Don't get into the habit of always coming in at the last minute
      - 2) Don't be in such a rush to leave after the service is ended
  2. **Visitors who frequent our services**
    - a. Who naturally draw conclusions about the congregation during their visit
      - 1) Will they conclude we are really disciples of Jesus? - cf. **Jn 13:35**
      - 2) Will they say in their hearts "God is truly among you"? - cf. **1 Co 14:25**
    - b. So take the time to welcome them and visit with them - **He 13:2**
  3. **Especially our Lord**
    - a. As He promised in **Mt 18:20**
    - b. Do we act as we would if He were bodily present?
- **Proper awareness of those present makes the assembly more significant to us**

### **C. ENGAGE YOURSELF IN THE SERVICE...**

1. **Look and listen**

- a. Use your eyes to help you pay attention, by watching those who lead the services
  - b. Use your ears to listen, for blessings come to those who hear well - cf. **Mk 4:24-25**
  2. **Sing and pray**
    - a. Join in the singing, which is designed to edify - **Ep 5:19; Co 3:16**
    - b. Pray along in heart with those who lead, adding your 'amen' - cf. **1 Co 14:15-16**
- **Worshipping God is not a spectator sport; it requires active participation!**

#### **D. SIT TOWARD THE FRONT...**

1. **Able to enjoy the singing more**
    - a. When the majority of the singers are behind you, you will hear more
    - b. When they sit in front of you, their volume is directed away from you
  2. **Able to better concentrate on the sermon**
    - a. Up front there are less distractions
    - b. Sitting in the back, your attention is drawn by every movement by those in front
    - c. Children especially, get more out of it by sitting up front (I certainly did!)
- **We can't all sit up front; but if we have a choice, why not use it?**

#### **E. THE MORE YOU GO, THE MORE YOU GROW...**

1. **The more you come, the more (and faster) you will grow!**
    - a. This is true in physical exercise (cf. once a week vs. three times a week)
    - b. Should we expect spiritual exercise to be in different? - cf. **1 Ti 4:7-8**
  2. **"How often do I have to come?"** is indicative of spiritual immaturity
    - a. It displays a lack of true love for Christ and His brethren
    - b. It shows that one is selfishly concerned with how little they can do to save themselves
    - c. Does the love of God abide in such a person? - cf. **1 Jn 3:16-19**
- **There is a direct correlation between how often you attend and the depth of your spiritual maturity!**

### CONCLUSION

1. I have never known a truly happy Christian...
  - a. Who made it a practice to assemble with other Christians only on Sunday
  - b. When they had ample opportunity to do so more often
2. Like many they "lead lives of quiet desperation" (**Thoreau**)...
  - a. They have a semblance of religion, but no real power - cf. **2 Ti 3:1-5**
  - b. They have enough religion to make themselves miserable
3. The happiest Christians are those who attend every service they can...
  - a. They are happy because they are stronger in their relationship with the Lord and brethren
  - b. They have learned how to serve the Lord with gladness!

My prayer is that these studies will help us all to be able say with David...

***"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'"***  
***(Psa 122:1)***

# Serving The Lord With Gladness

## Getting More Out Of The Singing

### INTRODUCTION

1. An important part of our assemblies the act of singing praises...
  - a. We spend nearly a third of our assemblies engaged in this activity
  - b. Rightly so, for it has the potential of reaping great spiritual benefits
2. Singing is an important element of “**Serving The Lord With Gladness**”...
  - a. It is mentioned in the text upon which our title is based - **Psa 100:2**
  - b. There were those in Old Testament times who delighted in singing - cf. **Psa 63:3-5**
  - c. Christians were taught to respond to the goodness of God in a similar way - **Ja 5:13**
3. But I often wonder if some have lost the joy of singing...
  - a. Many Christians sing with virtually no emotion, some do not sing at all!
  - b. I have personally known Christians, who...
    - 1) Complained because time available for classes was taken up by the singing of a few hymns
    - 2) Will not attend a worship service if they know it will be devoted primarily to singing
  - c. In contrast, it was common in the past for people to travel some distance to attend a service devoted to praising God in song
4. Why do such conditions exist? I suspect it may be a failure to appreciate:
  - a. The true purpose of singing
  - b. How we can get more out of singing

[To get more out of the singing, that we might truly serve the Lord with gladness, let's first review...]

### I. THE PURPOSE OF SINGING

#### **A. TO PRAISE THE LORD...**

1. This is the most common concept of the purpose of singing
    - a. Indeed, this is certainly the idea inherent in the word ‘**hymn**’
    - b. Which comes from the Greek word **humnos**, meaning “a song in praise of”
  2. Praising God should be a natural for Christians !
    - a. David reacted this way to the blessings God gave him - **Psa 28:6-7**
    - b. Paul and Silas even reacted to persecution with singing praises - **Ac 16:25**
  3. Singing is one of the **spiritual sacrifices** that we are to offer to God - **He 13:15**
    - a. As spiritual priests we offer up “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God” - **1 Pe 2:5**
    - b. If we are not careful, we might be guilty of offering defiled service to God as was the case in Malachi's day! - cf. **Mal 1:7-8,12-13**
- **Is not God worthy of our best praise?**

#### **B. TO TEACH AND ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER...**

1. Our singing is not just directed toward God...
    - a. Certainly, many songs are
    - b. But many songs are rightly directed to each other - cf. **Co 3:16; Ep 5:19**
  2. That's because many songs are designed to teach one another
    - a. Teaching and admonishing us to live properly, to enjoy the blessings of the Christian life
    - b. It might even be said that 'congregational singing' is actually 'congregational teaching'!
- **Do not our brethren deserve the best encouragement we can offer?**

### **C. TO BE FILLED AND ENRICHED...**

1. Singing can be a means to being **filled with the Spirit**
    - a. Paul charged the Ephesians to be filled with the Spirit - **Ep 5:18**
    - b. He explained how: by singing and making melody in one's heart to the Lord - **Ep 5:19**
  2. Singing can be a means to being **enriched by the Word of Christ**
    - a. Paul charged the Colossians to let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly - **Co 3:16a**
    - b. Again he explains: by singing with grace in one's heart to the Lord - **Co 3:16b**
- **For a truly Spirit-filled life enriched by the Word of Christ, singing is essential!**

[When done properly, singing is a wonderful blessing. How can we get the most out of our singing...?]

## **II. GETTING MORE OUT OF OUR SINGING**

### **A. ENGAGE THE 'MIND' AS YOU SING...**

1. Remember, singing is **teaching** and **admonishing** one another
  2. This assumes that we understand what we sing - cf. **1 Co 14:15**
  3. We must be careful that our enjoyment of singing is not like how many people enjoy their popular music (i.e., liking the music without necessarily understanding the words)
- **Give careful attention to the words of the songs**

### **B. ENGAGE THE 'HEART' AS YOU SING...**

1. When we sing, we must do so...
    - a. "with grace in your hearts" - **Co 3:16**
    - b. "making melody in your heart" - **Ep 5:19**
  2. This assumes that we involve our 'heart strings' (emotions) as we sing!
  3. To sing without emotion (without grace in our hearts)...
    - a. Is hypocritical, and condemned by Jesus! - **Mt 15:7-8**
    - b. Will be evident in our countenances! - cf. **Pro 15:13**
- **Put your heart into your singing**

### **C. EXPAND THE SPHERE OF YOUR SINGING...**

1. Is your singing limited just to the public assemblies, on the first day of the week?
  2. Singing, like prayer, ought to be spontaneous, arising whenever the circumstances call for it - cf. **Ac 16:25; Psa 34:1-3**
  3. Sing while you work, travel, or while alone in your private meditations
  4. Make use of hymns on tapes or CDs when traveling or meditating
  5. Take advantage of special opportunities to sing, such as monthly and annual singings
- **Increase your opportunities to sing at other times with others, and when alone**

**D. ENHANCE YOUR SINGING BY WHERE YOU SIT...**

1. Sitting alone or spread out discourages many from singing as they might otherwise
  2. People become more involved, are more uplifted, edify others better, when they sit together and closer to the song leader
- **One of the first steps to better singing is to sit with others who love to sing!**

**E. UTILIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN TO SING...**

1. Singing is more enjoyable when we are able to read musical notes, sing different parts
  2. Churches often provide singing classes; every opportunity to sing is an opportunity to learn
- **Take advantage of any opportunity to learn how to sing**

**CONCLUSION**

1. Singing is like any other activity...the more you put into it, the more you get out of it
2. Increase your joy of singing, and you will get much more out of going to church
3. Have we lost the joy of singing...?
  - a. If we could see ourselves as song leaders do, we might be constrained to say yes
  - b. If so, rekindle this act of worship which can do so much toward **“Serving The Lord With Gladness”**

May David’s attitude, truly describe our own when it comes to singing...

*“I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.” (Psa 104:33)*

*“Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.” (Psa 147:1)*



# Serving The Lord With Gladness

## Getting More Out Of The Prayers

### INTRODUCTION

1. Together with singing, an important part of our assemblies are our prayers...
  - a. Often beginning our service, and always concluding them
  - b. Interspersed throughout the course of our service
2. Prayer likewise is an important element of “**Serving The Lord With Gladness**”...
  - a. It is implied in the text upon which our title is based - **Psa 100:4**
  - b. Paul stressed its inclusion in conduct suitable in the house of God - **1 Ti 2:1-2; 3:15**
3. Yet prayer can easily become a meaningless exercise...
  - a. If prayers are offered by rote, with little thought by those offering the prayer
  - b. If prayers are hardly listened to, and minds wander to other things

[To get more from our public prayers, that we might truly serve the Lord with gladness, let’s review...]

### I. PRAYER IN OUR ASSEMBLIES

#### **A. THE PLACE OF PRAYER...**

1. Prayers were offered in the assemblies of the early Christians
    - a. As indicated in **1 Co 14:15-17**
    - b. Especially in times of trouble - cf. **Ac 4:23-31; 12:5,12**
  2. Prayers were enjoined by the apostle Paul
    - a. To give thanks for all things - **Ep 5:20; 1 Th 5:18**
    - b. To pray for all men, and for those in authority - **1 Ti 2:1-2**
- **Christians joined together in supplication and thanksgiving pleases God - 1 Ti 2:3-4**

#### **B. THE POWER OF PRAYER...**

1. Prayers of a righteous man avails much - **Ja 5:16** (how much more the prayers of many?)
  2. Prayers of faith will raise the sick - **Ja 5:15** (when it is the Lord’s will)
  3. Prayers result in the peace of God guarding our hearts and minds - **Ph 4:6-7**
  4. Prayers can result in the peace among nations - cf. **1 Ti 2:2** (otherwise, why pray?)
  5. Prayer can impart:
    - a. Strength for those struggling with temptation - **Mt 26:41**
    - b. Forgiveness for those who fall into temptation - **Ac 8:22; 1 Jn 1:9**
    - c. Opportunity for the spread of the gospel - **Mt 9:38; Co 4:2-3; 2 Th 3:1**
    - d. Boldness to those who proclaim the gospel - **Ep 6:18-20**
- **Christians in their prayers work together with God to produce great things!**

[Prayer rightly holds an important place in our assemblies. How can we get more out of the prayers...?]

## **II. GETTING MORE OUT OUR PRAYERS**

### **A. BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF PRAYER...**

1. Jesus would have you believe in the power of prayer
    - a. The power of persistent prayer - **Mt 7:7-11**; cf. **Lk 18:1-8**
    - b. The power of praying together - **Mt 18:19**
    - c. The power of praying with faith - **Mt 21:22**
  2. Assumed are the following conditions:
    - a. That we are doing the Father's will - **1 Jn 3:22**; cf. **1 Pe 3:12**; **Pro 28:9**
    - b. That we ask according to His will - **1 Jn 5:14,15**
- **Those who believe in the efficacy of prayer, will rejoice when Christians pray**

### **B. DEVELOP A PERSONAL PRACTICE OF PRAYER...**

1. Prayer is more meaningful when it is a familiar experience
    - a. You will appreciate its value more
    - b. You will have developed the mental discipline to get more out of praying
  2. So take to heart the following admonitions regarding prayer:
    - a. "...continuing steadfastly in prayer..." - **Ro 12:12**
    - b. "Continue earnestly in prayer..." - **Co 4:2**
    - c. "Pray without ceasing" - **1 Th 5:17**
- **People who pray often, love to pray**

### **C. TAKE A HUMBLE POSITION WHEN YOU PRAY...**

1. The Bible describes various 'praying postures'
    - a. Standing - **1 Sam 1:26**; **Mk 11:25**; **Lk 18:13**
    - b. Hands spread out and/or lifted heavenward - **1 Kin 8:22**; **Neh 8:6**; **1 Ti 2:8**
    - c. Bowing the head - **Neh 8:6**
    - d. Lifting heavenward of the eyes - **Jn 17:1**
    - e. Kneeling - **Ac 20:36**
    - f. Falling down with the face upon the ground - **Mt 26:39**
    - g. Bowing the head, with face between the knees - **1 Kin 18:42**
    - h. Bowing the head, while striking the breast - **Lk 18:13**
  2. While there is no 'official posture' for prayer...
    - a. The posture reflects the attitude of the one praying
    - b. The posture should reflect humility, reverence
    - c. Select a posture that you feel comfortable with, that reflects your true state of mind
- **Prayer is a state of mind, which can be enhanced by bodily position**

### **D. PRAY ALONG WITH THOSE WHO LEAD IN PRAYER...**

1. Don't be a passive listener, be an active participant
  2. In your heart, tell the Lord you agree with what is being said
- **Make the public prayer your own personal prayer**

### **E. OFFER A HEARTY "AMEN!" AT THE CLOSE OF PRAYER...**

1. The word 'amen' is transliterated from Hebrew into both Greek and English
  - a. It means 'truly, verily' - **ISBE**

- b. At the end of a statement, it means: ‘so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled’ - **Thayer**
  - c. Jesus used it in concluding His pattern prayer - **Mt 6:13**
  - 2. It affirms agreement with what is said
    - a. In the primitive churches it was common for the general audience to say ‘Amen’ at the close of the prayer (**1 Co 14:16**) - **Easton**
    - b. It was a custom, which passed over from the synagogues to the Christian assemblies, that when he who had read or discoursed, had offered up solemn prayer to God, the others responded Amen, and thus made the substance of what was uttered their own - **Thayer**
- **Public prayers are enhanced for all, when concluded with a hearty “Amen!”**

## CONCLUSION

- 1. The power of prayer is too important to be taken lightly...
  - a. It is an avenue by which we can thank and praise God
  - b. It is a means by which we can bring God’s blessings on ourselves and others for whom we pray
- 2. Give prayer its proper due by...
  - a. Believing in the power of prayer
  - b. Developing a personal practice of prayer
  - c. Taking a humble position when you pray
  - d. Praying in your heart along with those who lead in prayer
  - e. Offering a hearty “Amen!” at the close of the prayers

Joined with joyful singing, heartfelt praying will go along way to our **“Serving The Lord With Gladness”...!**

# Serving The Lord With Gladness

## Getting More Out Of The Lord's Supper

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Lord's Supper was an important activity in the weekly assemblies of the early church...
  - a. The Didache (ca. 95 A.D.) indicates Christians were to come together on the first day of the week to break bread - **Didache 14:1**
  - b. Justin Martyr (ca. 150 A.D.) records how Christians assembled on Sunday and partook of the Supper - **Apology I, 67**
  - c. "...the early church writers from Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, to Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Cyprian, all with one consent, declare that the church observed the first day of the week. They are equally agreed that the Lord's Supper was observed weekly, on the first day of the week." - **B. W. Johnson, People's New Testament**
  
2. It is an activity that can be easily abused...
  - a. The church at Corinth abused its observance of it - cf. **1 Co 11:17-22**
  - b. The weekly frequency can easily lead to it becoming a meaningless exercise, with grave consequences - cf. **1 Co 11:27**
  
3. But when properly observed, it can be...
  - a. A truly spiritual manifestation of worship
  - b. A source of wonderful fellowship and great blessings
  - c. A key element of "**Serving The Lord With Gladness**"

[That we might get more out of our weekly observance, let's first review...]

### I. THE LORD'S SUPPER IN OUR ASSEMBLIES

#### **A. A MEMORIAL...**

1. Note Paul's account as given by the Lord Himself - **1 Co 11:23-25**
    - a. We eat the bread in memory of His body
    - b. We drink the cup (fruit of the vine) in memory of His blood
  2. We therefore commemorate the death of Jesus on the cross - **Mt 26:28**
    - a. Whose death make the new covenant possible - **He 9:16**
    - b. Whose blood was shed for the remission of sins - **Ep 1:7**
- **As the Passover was a memorial commemorating Israel's deliverance from Egypt through the blood of the lambs on the door post, so the Supper is a memorial of our Lord's death who makes our deliverance from the bondage of sin possible**

#### **B. A PROCLAMATION...**

1. We proclaim our faith in the efficacy of the Lord's death - **1 Co 11:26a**
  - a. That His death was indeed for our sins
  - b. If we did not believe He died for our sins, then why keep the Supper?

2. We also proclaim our faith in the Lord's return - **1 Co 11:26b**
  - a. For it is to be done "till He comes"
  - b. If we did not believe He is coming, then why keep the Supper?
- **Thus the Lord's Supper looks forward as well as backward, and will ever be observed by His disciples who trust in His redemption and anticipate His return!**

### C. A COMMUNION...

1. A fellowship or sharing in the blood of Christ - **1 Co 10:16a**
  - a. As we partake, we commune with the blood of Christ
  - b. Perhaps in the sense of reinforcing blessings we enjoy through the blood of Christ - cf. **1 Jn 1:7,9**
2. A fellowship or sharing in the body of Christ - **1 Co 10:16b-17**
  - a. As we partake, we commune with the body of Christ
  - b. Perhaps in the sense of reinforcing fellowship together in the body of Christ (i.e., the church), as we break bread together
- **As a fellowship meal, the Supper brings us closer to Jesus and to one another**

## II. GETTING MORE OUT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

### A. MAKE IT A TIME OF REVERENCE...

1. It should be observed "in a worthy manner" (NKJV) - **1 Co 11:27,29**
  - a. The KJV says 'worthily', which some have misunderstood
  - b. It is an adverb, describing how we take it, not whether we are worthy (none are truly worthy)
2. It should be observed with respect for the supreme price Jesus paid for our sins
  - a. E.g., the cruel torture and humiliation of His physical body
  - b. E.g., the anguish suffered as Jesus hung on the cross
3. Failure to observe with proper reverence brings condemnation - **1 Co 11:27,29**
  - a. One will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord
  - b. One will eat and drink judgment to himself
- **To make light of this memorial puts one in the same category as those who mocked Him as He hung on the cross!**

### B. MAKE IT A TIME OF REFLECTION...

1. To reflect on the suffering Christ endured - **1 Co 11:24-25**
  - a. By reading passages like **Psa 22**, **Isa 53**, and the gospel accounts of Christ's suffering
  - b. By reading songs written to prepare us for partaking of the Supper
2. To reflect on one's spiritual condition - **1 Co 11:28**
  - a. Are we living in a manner that shows appreciation for His sacrifice?
  - b. Have we accepted the grace of God in our lives? - cf. **2 Co 5:18-6:1**
  - c. Are we living for Jesus who died for us? - cf. **2 Co 5:14-15; Ga 2:20**
  - d. Are we guilty of willful sinning? - cf. **He 10:26-29**
  - e. Do we, by refusing to repent of our sins, crucify Him again? - cf. **He 6:4-6**
- **The Supper is a very private time between a Christian and his Lord; a time to reflect on Christ's death and its meaning for our life!**

### C. MAKE IT A TIME OF REUNION...

1. There is ample indication the Supper is designed to be a communal meal
    - a. The disciples “came together” to break bread - **Ac 20:7**
    - b. When they came together, they were to “wait for one another” - **1 Co 11:33**
    - c. Partaking together of “one bread”, they demonstrate they are “one bread and one body” - **1 Co 10:16**
  2. We commune not just with the Lord, but with one another as brethren
    - a. Make a special effort to assemble with others for the Lord’s Supper each Lord’s Day
    - b. Give thanks for the unity Christ’s death makes possible for us to share - **Ep 2:13-16**
- **The Supper is a time to reinforce our oneness in the Body of Christ!**

### CONCLUSION

1. The Psalmist proclaims why we should “serve the Lord with gladness”...

*“...It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” (Psa 100:3)*

2. And how is it possible for us to be ‘His people and the sheep of His pasture’...?
  - a. Because Jesus is the Door of the sheep- **Jn 10:7-10**
  - b. Because Jesus is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep - **Jn 10:11,14-16**
3. This is why the Lord’s Supper should be a weekly observance done with gladness...
  - a. It is a time of **reverence** in respect to Him who died for us
  - b. It is a time of **reflection** which should renew us to live for Him
  - c. It is a time of **reunion** in which we experience the union for which He died

Shall we not make the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper an important element in our “**Serving The Lord With Gladness**”...?

# Serving The Lord With Gladness

## Getting More Out Of The Collection

### INTRODUCTION

1. In our assemblies on the first day of the week, we have the opportunity to give...
  - a. Following the charge given to the churches of Galatia and Corinth - **1 Co 16:1-2**
  - b. Commonly referred to as the **'collection'** or **'contribution'**
2. It is not unusual for people to have misconceptions about this act of worship...
  - a. Considering it an intrusion on what is otherwise a spiritual service
  - b. But as a **'necessary evil'** for the church to carry on its work
  - c. Who may have difficulty engaging in this act of worship with **'gladness'**
  - d. Especially if they give grudgingly, feeling compelled to give
3. But when properly understood, the act of giving can be...
  - a. A truly spiritual manifestation of worship
  - b. A source of wonderful fellowship and great blessings
  - c. Another element of **"Serving The Lord With Gladness"**

[That we might get more out of our weekly contribution, let's first review what is revealed about...]

### I. THE COLLECTION IN OUR ASSEMBLIES

#### **A. THE EARLY CHURCH CARED FOR ONE ANOTHER...**

1. As exemplified in the church at Jerusalem - cf. **Ac 2:44,45; 4:32-35**
2. Such care went beyond those in the local congregation - **Ac 11:27-30; Ro 15:25-26**  
-- **The early Christians gladly gave when the need was there**

#### **B. A WEEKLY COLLECTION WAS INSTITUTED...**

1. To provide for the needs of the saints - **1 Co 16:1-2**
  2. Examples were given to encourage sacrificial giving
    - a. The example of the Macedonians - **2 Co 8:1-5**
    - b. The example of Jesus Himself - **2 Co 8:9**
  3. Principles were taught to determine how much one should give
    - a. "As he may prosper" - **1 Co 16:2**
    - b. Whatever is given with "a willing mind" - **2 Co 8:12**
    - c. "According to what one has" - **2 Co 8:12-13**
    - d. "As he purposes (plans) in his heart" - **2 Co 9:7**
    - e. Whatever one can give "cheerfully", not "grudgingly" or "of necessity" - **2 Co 9:7**
    - f. Keeping in mind the principle of "sowing and reaping" - **2 Co 9:6,8**
- **The collection guided by such principles ensured ready funds cheerfully given**

#### **c. THE USE OF FUNDS SO COLLECTED...**

1. Helped needy Christians - cf. **1 Co 16:1; 2 Co 9:1**
  2. Including those who devoted their lives to preaching the gospel
    - a. The Lord ordained those who preach the gospel should be supported - cf. **1 Co 9:6-14**
    - b. Paul received such support - cf. **2 Co 11:8,9**
- **Thus an efficient means was provided to raise funds for what is the proper work of the church (evangelism, edification, benevolence)**

[Yet it is important not to look at the collection as simply a means to raise funds. It is actually an opportunity to **express grace, enhance fellowship, and experience joy...!**]

## **II. GETTING MORE OUT OF THE COLLECTION**

### **A. UNDERSTAND THE GRACE OF GIVING...**

1. Paul mentions God's grace when he writes of giving
    - a. How it was manifested in the Macedonians' giving - **2 Co 8:1-2**
    - b. How he viewed it as expression of the Corinthians' giving - **2 Co 8:6-7**
    - c. How Christ's humiliation was a demonstration of grace - **2 Co 8:9**
  2. He wrote of God's grace at work in those willing to give
    - a. How God would enable those who gave, to give more - **2 Co 9:8-11**
    - b. How such grace would cause others to long for those who give - **2 Co 9:14**
- **When done properly, giving is a manifestation God's grace in our lives!**

### **B. LEARN THE BLESSEDNESS OF GIVING...**

1. The Bible speaks of the blessedness of giving
    - a. In the words of the Psalmist - **Psa 41:1-3**
    - b. In the words of Jesus - **Ac 20:35**
  2. The blessedness of giving includes:
    - a. God's providential care in this life - cf. **Psa 112:5-9; Isa 58:7-11; Lk 12:22-31**
    - b. Laying up treasure in heaven - **Lk 12:32-34; 1 Ti 6:17-19**
    - c. Having fellowship in the work of others - cf. **Ph 1:5-7; 4:10-18**
- **Giving blesses the one who gives, more than the one who receives!**

### **C. EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF GIVING...**

1. By giving **often**
  - a. **Weekly:** to the Lord - cf. **1 Co 16:1-2**
  - b. **Monthly:** to your favorite charity - cf. **1 Ti 6:18**
  - c. **Daily:** as you have opportunity and ability - cf. **Ga 6:10**
2. By giving **liberally**
  - a. One tenth to the Lord certainly has scriptural precedent
  - b. As you reap, sow more abundantly! (e.g., the 'graduated tithe') - cf. **2 Co 9:10-11**
  - c. Remember the examples that should inspire us in our giving
    - 1) The disciples who left all to follow the Lord - **Mk 1:16-20; 10:28**
    - 2) Zacchaeus, who gave half to the poor - **Lk 19:8**
    - 3) The widow and her two mites - **Lk 21:1-4**
    - 4) The Christians in Jerusalem - **Ac 2:44-45; 4:34-35**
    - 5) Barnabas, who sold land - **Ac 4:36-37**



- 6) The churches in Macedonia who gave beyond their ability - **2 Co 8:1-5**  
-- **The more we give, the more we experience the joy of giving!**

### CONCLUSION

1. We have seen that giving has the potential to...
  - a. Express **grace**
  - b. Enhance **fellowship**
  - c. Experience **joy**
  
2. For giving, especially our giving in worship, to meet such potential, we need to...
  - a. Understand how giving is an expression of God's grace in our lives
  - b. Realize that giving blesses the giver more than the receiver
  - c. Give often and liberally to truly become joyful givers

May the grace of God be so active in our lives, that we will be able to make the weekly collection just another way to **“Serving The Lord With Gladness”...!**

# Serving The Lord With Gladness

## Getting More Out Of The Preaching

### INTRODUCTION

1. In most of our assemblies, much of the time is devoted to preaching...
  - a. In which the focus is (or should be) on the Word of God
  - b. In which God's Word is expounded upon and applied to our lives
2. Why so much time devoted to this activity...?
  - a. It certainly has scriptural precedent - cf. **Ac 20:7**
  - b. It also has great potential to inform, convict, and convert - cf. **1 Ti 4:13,16; 2 Ti 4:1-2**
3. Despite its potential, preaching often affects people differently...
  - a. Some are informed and inspired
  - b. Others are bored and unimpressed

[Why the difference? Again, we get out of something based on what we put into it. To see how that applies to listening to someone preach, let's take a closer look at...]

### I. PREACHING IN OUR ASSEMBLIES

#### **A. THE BENEFITS OF PREACHING...**

1. **One can be blessed** by what they hear
  - a. For those willing to listen properly, there are wonderful things to learn - **Mt 13:16-17**
  - b. Things which great people (David, Daniel, etc.) did not have the opportunity to learn
  - c. Things pertaining to wonderful blessings that are now available in Christ! - cf. **Ep 1:3**
  - d. We may miss out on these blessings if we do not carefully listen!
2. **One can develop saving faith** by what they hear
  - a. God has ordained that we be saved through faith in Christ - cf. **Ro 1:16-17**
  - b. Such faith often comes through listening to a preacher - cf. **Ro 10:14,17**
  - c. One can certainly gain faith through reading God's Word (cf. **Jn 20:30-31**), yet many are often dependent upon what they hear proclaimed
  - d. Does our 'listening' during the preaching hinder the development of our faith?
3. **One can be more fruitful** by what they hear
  - a. Bearing fruit comes from 'understanding' the grace of God! - cf. **Co 1:6**
    - 1) Note that the gospel was bearing fruit in the Colossians
    - 2) But that was "since the day you heard and knew (understood, NASB) the grace of God in truth;"
  - b. By careful listening we can 'understand' God's grace, and thereby motivated to bear fruit to His glory!
4. **One can avoid apostasy** by what they hear
  - a. There is a real danger of drifting, by neglecting "so great a salvation" - cf. **He 2:1-3**
  - b. The solution is to "give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard"

- c. This assumes that we have been listening to the Word in the first place!
- **These are just a few of the blessings that can come from listening to the preaching of God's Word!**

## **B. DIFFERENT KINDS OF LISTENERS...**

1. Yet some listeners are **"dull of hearing"**
    - a. Like some of the Hebrew Christians - cf. **He 5:11**
      - 1) When a person has this problem, it is hard for others to explain things to them!
      - 2) The fault is not with the subject material, nor the preacher, but with the listener!
    - b. Isaiah wrote of such people, and Jesus applied it to many in His day - **Mt 13:13-15**
      - 1) People are this way because they are dull of heart!
      - 2) Which prevents them from understanding God's truth, turning from sin, being healed (saved) by God!
  2. And some listeners have **"itching ears"**
    - a. Paul warned Timothy about such people - **2 Ti 4:3-4**
    - b. They listen only to that which is pleasing to them, rejecting truth for 'fables'
    - c. They do not like "sound doctrine" (which often requires the kind of preaching mentioned in **2 Ti 4:2**)
  3. But the best listeners hear with **"a noble and good heart"**
    - a. Jesus spoke of these in His parable of the sower - cf. **Lk 8:15**
    - b. The Bereans were listeners of this kind - **Ac 17:11**
    - c. They were 'fair-minded' (NKJV), thus willing to give Paul a fair hearing
    - d. It showed in how they 'received' (or listened to) the word: "with all readiness"
- **What kind of listeners are we when others preach the Word of God to us?**

[We all should be listeners like the Bereans! If we are, then every opportunity to hear the Word preached to us will be an opportunity to be blessed! Here are suggestions for...]

## **II. GETTING MORE OUT OF THE PREACHING**

### **A. MAKE LISTENING AN ACT OF WORSHIP...**

1. How you listen to God's word being read or preached is as much an indication of your devotion to God as to how you pray or sing
  2. When you have opportunities to listen, do it with 'a worshipful attitude'
  3. Think of how you would listen if some great person were speaking
  4. Imagine your rapt attention if you were listening to some famous person
- **Does not the proclamation of God's Word deserve as much attention?**

### **B. LISTEN FROM FIRST TO LAST...**

1. That is, pay attention all the way through
  - a. Do you expect to understand a novel by simply reading a sentence here and there?
  - b. So it is with preaching: sentences, phrases, words, to be understood must be heard in light of the context in which they are presented
2. Preachers must follow basic rules of speech so as to be understood:
  - a. Introduce the subject
  - b. Present main points with supporting arguments

- c. Conclude with a summary
- **Listeners must listen to ALL the parts to truly benefit from what they hear**

**C. LOOK AT THE PREACHER...**

- 1. This greatly aids your concentration
  - a. Looking elsewhere makes it easy for your mind to wander
  - b. Closing your eyes makes it easy for you to nod off!
- 2. This requires self-discipline, but it is conducive to developing a longer attention span
- **Try it, and see if it does not make a difference!**

**D. READ ALONG IN YOUR BIBLE...**

- 1. You remember more of what you both see and hear over what you simply hear
  - a. Which is why visual aids are often used in sermons
  - b. But the greatest visual aid is your own Bible!
- 2. Your knowledge of the Scriptures can be greatly improved by doing this
- 3. It may be hard at first to keep up, but persevere and it will soon become easier
- **We encourage children to do this, shouldn't adults set the example?**

**E. LISTEN WITH FAITH...**

- 1. That is, listen with a willingness to accept and believe what is shown in God's Word
- 2. Those Israelites who died in the wilderness did not listen with faith! - **He 4:1-2**
- 3. If we don't listen 'with faith,' the same sort of thing will happen to us
- **Do we want to fall short of our heavenly rest?**

**F. LISTEN WITH A MIND TO ACT...**

- 1. Are we like the people in Ezekiel's day? - cf. **Eze 33:30-32**
  - a. They loved to hear him, but for the wrong reason
  - b. Do we love to hear sermons because of how well the speaker presents them?
- 2. Hearing must be accompanied by doing to be of any profit - **Ja 1:22-25**
- **As important as good preaching may be, the blessedness comes only if the listeners are doers as well as hearers!**

**CONCLUSION**

- 1. The role of preaching has an important place in the kingdom of God...
  - a. Jesus used it in His ministry - **Mt 4:17,23**
  - b. Jesus wanted His gospel preached to every person - **Mk 16:15-16**
  - c. It has the potential to do much good - cf. **Ro 1:15-16**
- 2. We owe it to ourselves as listeners to give the Word of God its due...
  - a. To receive the Word with all readiness - **Ac 17:11**
  - b. To receive the Word with good and noble hearts - **Lk 8:15**
  - c. To receive the Word with every intention to do what it says - **Ja 1:22,25**

For those willing to so listen, preaching will aid us in **"Serving The Lord With Gladness"...**!

# Serving The Lord With Gladness

## Getting More Out Of The Bible Classes

### INTRODUCTION

1. In this series, our theme has been “**Serving The Lord With Gladness**”...
  - a. Taken from **Psalm 100**, especially the second verse
  - b. With a goal to enjoy our service to the Lord more
2. We have examined how one can get more out of...
  - a. The assemblies of the church
  - b. The singing offered in praise and edification
  - c. The prayers rendered to God and for one another
  - d. The Lord’s Supper in which we commune
  - e. The collection for the saints and work of the church
3. Our final study addresses the subject of **Bible classes**, an opportunity...
  - a. To serve the Lord in most congregations
  - b. Not taken by many, nor fully utilized by most

[Yet proper utilization of our Bible classes can contribute much toward serving the Lord with gladness in all other areas! To understand how, let’s first summarize...]

### I. THE ROLE OF BIBLE CLASSES

#### **A. THE OPPORTUNITIES OF BIBLE CLASSES...**

1. **Provided by the local congregation**
    - a. Most churches offer classes for both children and adults
    - b. Usually this includes classes on Sunday mornings and a midweek evening
  2. **Provided by individuals**
    - a. Bible classes also occur frequently in the homes of Christians
    - b. At the direction of church leaders, or by personal initiative
- **The opportunities to participate in Bible classes are many**

#### **B. THE BENEFITS OF BIBLE CLASSES...**

1. **To study the Word of God more deeply**
  - a. Textual studies often examine the Word verse by verse
  - b. Topical studies allow for more in-depth examination
2. **To ask questions about what is studied**
  - a. Classes are less formal, allowing for questions and answers
  - b. When the whole church is gathered, there is not as much flexibility - cf. **1 Co 14:34-35**
3. **To share one’s own knowledge of the Bible**
  - a. Preaching allows the speaker to share his knowledge
  - b. Comments in class allow for those in the class to share their knowledge

4. **To accelerate the rate of one's spiritual growth**
    - a. Spiritual growth is related to one's knowledge of the Word - cf. **1 Pe 2:2**
    - b. The more often you study, the faster you will grow!
  5. **To enjoy the fellowship of studying with other Christians**
    - a. Bible classes are more informal, allowing for mutual sharing of comments
    - b. Often the comments of other students is just as edifying as those of the teacher
  6. **To encourage other Christians by your presence and participation**
    - a. Your presence encourages others; likewise, your absence discourages them
    - b. Your participation can inspire others to want to learn
- **The benefits of Bible classes are indeed many!**

[Yet despite such benefits, many people fail to attend the Bible classes. Some who do, don't get much out of them. Allow me to offer some suggestions on...]

## **II. GETTING MORE OUT OF THE BIBLE CLASSES**

### **A. ATTEND...**

1. One must attend if they are going to benefit from Bible classes
  2. One must attend regularly to truly benefit from the studies
  3. Remember, the rate of one's spiritual growth is affected by how often you attend
- **Do you make it a habit to attend the Bible classes regularly?**

### **B. PREPARE...**

1. Again, you get out of something based on what you put into it
  2. Prepare by studying the lessons ahead of time
  3. Obtain other aids to assist you in studying the text or topic
- **Do you come to Bible class ready the subject at hand?**

### **C. CONTRIBUTE...**

1. By sharing the fruits of your own study with comments
  2. By asking questions when something is not clear
  3. Good teachers like feedback, it helps to know if the message is getting across
- **Do you add to the overall value of the study by contributing to the class?**

### **D. TEACH...**

1. One of the best ways to learn a subject is to teach it
  2. You will likely get more out of the class than anyone else
  3. By teaching, you will of necessity attend, prepare, and contribute!
- **Are you willing to teach that others might benefit? - cf. 2 Ti 2:2; Ti 2:3**

### **E. ASSIST...**

1. Those not ready to teach can learn by assisting those who do teach
  2. They learn from mentors, observing how others teach - e.g., **Timothy**
  3. They are especially helpful in classes with small children
- **Are you willing to develop more teachers, by taking this small step?**

## **F. PRAY...**

1. Beginning study with a prayer like this: “Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.” - **Psa 119:18**
  2. As you study, asking God for understanding with a prayer like this: “Oh, that my ways were directed To keep Your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed, When I look into all Your commandments.” - **Psa 119:5-6**
  3. Ending a study with a prayer like this: “With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!” - **Psa 119:10-11**
- **Prayer puts one into the proper frame of mind to benefit from Bible study!**

## **CONCLUSION**

1. People **actively involved** in the Bible classes...
  - a. Learn the Word of God much faster
  - b. Benefit from the Word of God much sooner
  - c. Contribute to the health and growth of the church much more
2. Those **who do not attend** the Bible classes...
  - a. Rarely have more than a superficial knowledge of God’s Word
  - b. Often struggle in their spiritual lives because of their lack of knowledge
  - c. Are usually of little use to others in providing spiritual help and understanding

Yes, I believe very strongly in the value of attending and actively participating in Bible classes. In fact, I would go so far to say that it is a key element to truly **“Serving The Lord With Gladness”...!**