

# PERSPECTIVE

OCTOBER 2023

## GIVING WITHOUT THE **OFFERING PLATE**

A GUIDE TO GENEROSITY & CORPORATE WORSHIP



# CONTENTS



## ARTICLE ..... 1

*Giving without the Offering Plate: A Guide to Generosity and Corporate Worship*

*Jim Heiskell & Jack Lupas*



## BOOK HIGHLIGHT ..... 7

*Reading the Bible and Praying in Public*

Written by Stuart Olyott

*Recommended by Nana Agyekum*



## BOOK HIGHLIGHT ..... 8

*The Creedal Imperative*

Written by Carl R. Trueman

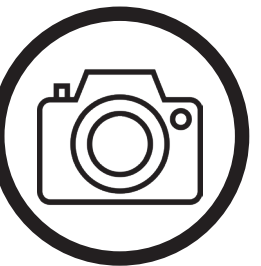
*Recommended by Matt Gerber*



## BIBLE READING PLAN ..... 9

*Take Up & Read*

*October*



## NEW MEMBERS ..... 10

*Luke Davis, Matt Flynn, Christopher Hoffman, Madison & Caroline Reike, Matt & Abbey Tillman, Katherine Wabler, & Emma Young*

## Giving without the Offering Plate: A Guide to Generosity and Corporate Worship

Throughout 2023, Mount Vernon has been thinking, praying, and talking about Corporate Worship. We want to ensure the Bible informs everything we do during corporate worship.

What about financial giving? At least in America, and for many years, Christians have grown accustomed to “passing the plate.” How should we think about this in an age when most of us utilize cards for purchases?

In this article, we want to address what the Bible says about financial giving. How is it linked to our worship of God? How should it relate to our corporate worship gatherings? As you read, remember that our financial giving reveals what is in our hearts. Keep that in mind as we help you to think practically about giving as it relates to several issues, including supporting the local church, apportioning your giving to various worthy causes, giving on Sunday morning, and the like.

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT GIVING FINANCIALLY?

According to Dave Ramsey, radio personality and financial advice guru, there are 2,500 references to money and possessions in the Bible. The Bible has a lot to say on the subject! Here are just a handful of references:

In the Old Testament, God commanded his people to give portions of their income—produce, grain, livestock, oil, and wine—to support the Levites (Lev. 27:30), to fund festivals (Deut. 12:10–18), and to help widows and orphans (Deut. 14:28–29). God also commanded “freewill” offerings to be in proportion to one’s income (Deut. 16:10).

In Malachi 3:8–12, God rebukes his people for “robbing him” by neglecting to bring their full tithe into the storehouse. The Lord challenges his people to test him in their giving.

In the New Testament, we see clear expectations for Christians to give. Two key passages in 1 and 2 Corinthians and the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:3–4 stand out.

#### **CHRISTIANS SHOULD GIVE REGULARLY AND PROPORTIONALLY.**

*Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of*

*every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper so that there will be no collecting when I come.*

1 Corinthians 16:1–2

A few reflections. First, Paul commanded each person to set aside and store up on the first day of the week (which, according to the Hebrew calendar, was Sunday), when early Christians met for corporate worship. Although most modern workers do not receive weekly pay, the principle is to have a regular and consistent rhythm to setting aside money for giving to the church.

Second, giving should be in accordance with one’s prosperity—“as he may prosper” (v. 2). Later, in 2 Corinthians 8:3, the apostle encourages believers to give “according to their means.” God materially prospers some more than others, and Christians are to give proportionately to their abundance.

#### **CHRISTIANS SHOULD GIVE SACRIFICIALLY AND EAGERLY.**

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul commends the Macedonian churches for their sacrificial giving. He noted how it flowed from their joy in the Lord. Their ability to give came from the Lord! God gave great grace—supernatural power—to the Macedonia churches so that they might give generously despite their “severe affliction” and “extreme poverty.” They gave with an “abundance of joy,” even “begging” for the privilege of “taking part in the relief of the (Jerusalem) saints.” What precipitated this extraordinary generosity? They “first gave themselves to the Lord.”

Take that in for a moment: their remarkable posture toward giving flowed from their love and devotion to God (2 Cor. 8:1–5). So it is with us. Our giving will always reflect our love for God and understanding of his incredible grace.

#### **CHRISTIANS SHOULD GIVE BOUNTIFULLY, DECISIVELY, WILLINGLY, AND CHEERFULLY.**

In 2 Corinthians 9:6–7, when Paul exhorted the Corinthians to give to the collection for the suffering saints in Jerusalem, he wrote, “whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap *bountifully*. Each one must give as he has *decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*”

Paul’s words speak for themselves. To sow bountifully is to contribute much to the work of the Lord. To give



decisively is to be thoughtful—knowing why you give and for what purpose. To give willingly is to do so without hesitation, trusting God will use those resources for his glory. And to give cheerfully is to be thankful for the opportunity to participate in the work of the Lord.

#### CHRISTIANS SHOULD GIVE IN SECRET.

We give privately and not for show. In other words, our goal must not be to get praise or glory from man. We should give from our love for God and an earnest desire to please him. Consider Matthew 6:3–4, “But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Reflecting upon all these passages, we remember that financial giving in the Bible is a privilege. Of course, there are times when giving will *feel* painful. We will be aware of the other ways we could have spent that money directly on ourselves. The gospel, however, challenges us to rethink our attitude toward generosity.

#### IS TITHING COMMANDED IN THE BIBLE?

*Bring the full tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, say the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.*

Malachi 3:10

The Bible encourages Christians to give freely and generously. From this Old Testament verse in Malachi, along with many other Old Testament passages, it's often been taught that Christians are mandated or obligated to tithe (give ten percent) to the local church. We disagree. We should not feel we “have to tithe,” especially if we think tithing is the path to receiving God's blessing.

What do we find in the New Testament? Jesus spoke only twice about tithing (Matt. 23:23–24 and Luke 18:11–14). In both cases, he reprimanded the Pharisees because of their spiritual pride. They saw themselves as being needed by God, not needing God. The act of giving made them feel superior. We should not get caught in the same trap!

Nowhere does the Bible mandate we give a certain percentage to the church. There is no formula for giving (though we agree this would make things a little easier). However, we find in Scripture freedom in giving because, as Christians, we are no longer under law but under grace. Jesus has fulfilled the Old Testament law—which includes all the commands for the upkeep of the temple,

including the support of priests. In short, you are free to give ten percent, and you are free to give more than ten percent. In fact, for some Christians, giving a full ten percent to the church may be a hardship God would not want them to bear. However, giving merely ten percent would be evidence of stinginess for others whom God has blessed with unusual material wealth.

Whatever amount you give, do it generously, out of a sense of gratitude for all that Christ has done for you.

#### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT FINANCIAL GIVING AS OUR WORSHIP TO THE LORD?

Jesus talked a lot about money. He taught that how we think about and handle money reveals what we believe about God.

Foundationally, we must understand that every penny we possess has been given to us by God. All money is God's, and we are simply stewards or managers of *his* money. Everything we give back to God for gospel work was already his to begin with (1 Chr. 29:11; 14). But make no mistake, we will have to give an account to God for what we have done with *his* money (Matt. 25:14–30).

We can use the money God gives us in one of two ways: To show that we value Christ more than money or that we value money more than Christ. How we use our money is a serious issue.

The definitive passage from Jesus' teaching is Matthew 6:19–24. Here, Jesus says, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (v. 21). In verse 24, he tells us how our money reveals what or whom we *worship*. If we serve money, Jesus shockingly says it shows we hate Christ. Serving and worshipping money is a deadly proposition.

Sandwiched between these two statements about money and God are these strange verses about the good (healthy) eye and the bad eye. What do these verses mean, and why are they here?

Having a bad eye means one doesn't correctly see the beauty and brightness of God. One with a bad eye cannot see God as the generous provider of all things (Matt. 20:1–16 and, specifically, v. 15b—“or is your eye bad because I am good?”). The person with a bad eye is worldly and is more concerned with worldly treasure. He or she is, therefore, in darkness—not truly knowing God and the greater value of a life devoted to *him*. The good eye sees heavenly treasure and serving God as infinitely more valuable than earthly treasure and serving money. The healthy eye sees money as

a means of glorifying God, helping others, and promoting gospel work—discipleship and evangelism—at home and worldwide.

To be clear, we are to worship God with our money. Let us always carry this mindset with us. We must earn it, spend it, and give it away in ways that show a watching world how much we treasure God and not money.

Brothers and sisters, we dare not fear *not* having enough money or losing it. Remember, we have a generous Heavenly Father: “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches, and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:32–34).

We have both endured seasons of financial strain. I (Jim) was in the position of raising funds when I served on the Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU) staff. And I (Jack) have felt the pressure of building a company and being unsure if it would succeed. In other words, we have both been in the position of relying on *God* to provide for our needs. But the truth is, we are all in that position, whether we know it or not. We can all face the temptation to be anxious over money. By God’s grace, we don’t have to be afraid.

### WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS WHO DON’T GIVE AT ALL TO THE LOCAL CHURCH THINK THROUGH?

Connie and I (Jim) grew up in mainline churches, and giving to the local church was simply not a personal priority. We both became Christians in college through the ministry of CRU. This challenged us to support individuals on staff, but we only gave a token amount to our local church. We didn’t feel either the need or the obligation to give in a meaningful way.

But over time, all that changed. We began to worship in more gospel-centered churches, even prior to Mount Vernon. Then, due to the faithful, gospel-centered teaching of the Word of God at Mount Vernon, the Holy Spirit gave us a desire to give to the local church in a more significant way. Why? A few reasons stand out:

- We were reminded of God’s sacrifice on the cross and gift to us in the person of Christ. “For God so love the world, that he *gave* his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16).

- We came to realize God’s plan for the fulfillment of the Great Commission was and is through the local church.
- We understood that the expenses of the local church were dependent on the gifts of faithful and generous members—including us. If you are being edified by the teaching and overall ministry of your church, shouldn’t you contribute to the material needs of the ministers? This is in line with Paul’s command in 1 Timothy 5:17–18.
- We also came to realize our money is not ours but God’s, and he expects us to steward it wisely. Giving to the local church became a priority, not an afterthought.
- We saw that giving to our local church was done to strengthen us and help build up our faith. Not only that, it is both honoring and pleasing to God. “Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Heb. 11:6).
- Finally, part of the vow we make as church members is to financially support the ministry of the church: “to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expense of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.” Financial giving to the local church is part of faithful membership in a local church.

### WHY DO CHURCHES ASK THEIR MEMBERS TO GIVE TO THEIR LOCAL CHURCH?

*Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

2 Corinthians 9:7

One of our greatest joys as Christians is giving to Mount Vernon. We do support other individuals and ministries outside of the church, but the bulk of our giving is to Mount Vernon.

Why do we do that? Several reasons come to mind:

- By giving to MVBC, we are supporting the mission and ministries of the church and its commitment to the Great Commission, as stated in Mathew 28:18–20. In other words, we believe the church is both the end and the goal of missions, and we are delighted to support our local church in these efforts. A scriptural

example of this kind of support is found in 3 John 6, where a local church is encouraged to “send” missionaries out “in a manner worthy of God.” Again, nearly twenty percent of the MVBC church budget is devoted to this kind of work.

- ✦ We are supporting those on our ministerial staff who have invested their lives in the furtherance of the gospel. “Let the one who is taught the Word share all good things with the one who teaches” (Gal. 6:6; cf. 1 Tim. 5:17–18). The staff as a whole is committed to supporting the pastoral work of the church, and we are pleased to help free them up for this important work.
- ✦ God is glorified when we give out of a pure heart. It demonstrates that our treasure is in heaven, not on things of this earth. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21). Christ is our greatest treasure! His local church is his body. We love the church and are thankful to be able to support good work.
- ✦ By giving to our local church, we are demonstrating our belief that the church has been a good steward of the funds we have entrusted to it. It also shows that we trust the leadership of the church to continue to do so in the future.

Again, we support ministries outside the church and will continue to do so. Nonetheless, we want to encourage you to prioritize giving to the local church.

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE AMOUNT AND THE METHOD OF FINANCIAL GIVING?

Look again at this important verse: “Each of you should give what you decide in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).

We already mentioned we do not think a tithe is mandatory. So how should we think, practically, about how much to give? With respect to tithing, this may be too little for some, but for others, ten percent may be too much. There is no fixed guideline in Scripture about the amount or the percentage we are to give.

As you think about this issue, please know that our giving needs to be an outpouring of our worship of God. Also, the amount we give is affected by whether it is done spontaneously or whether it is planned. Which should it be? The Apostle Paul admonishes the Corinthian church

as follows:

Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come (1 Cor. 16:1–2).

Here are some helpful guidelines from this passage for how we are to give:

- ✦ **GIVE FIRST.** Put aside and earmark money for giving that is not available for other expenses. Be disciplined in doing this. Otherwise, the money will be used for other purposes.
- ✦ **GIVE PROPORTIONALLY.** Giving should be based on your income. When you earn more, you should give more. A tithe may be a good place to start, but the Lord may lead you to give significantly more than ten percent. That is what Paul meant by the phrase “as he may prosper.”
- ✦ **GIVE WITH FORETHOUGHT.** Giving should be planned. Again, if you give in a haphazard fashion, you will most likely not give at all. Be committed to giving according to a plan.
- ✦ **GIVE FREQUENTLY.** The expenses and needs of the church are ongoing. Therefore, your giving should be ongoing and be done as frequently as possible. For some, this is every week; for others, every month. When we receive our income will understandably dictate when we give.

Is there ever an occasion to give spontaneously? Of course! If, in God’s providence, you receive more—a bonus or a gift—this could be a wonderful opportunity to give to the church, another faithful ministry, or an urgent need that requires your immediate attention. Either way, ask God to give you wisdom in managing your finances so you can respond generously to the regular needs of the church and to any other special needs that may arise.

### WHAT DOES CHURCH HISTORY TELL US ABOUT HOW AND WHY CHURCHES HAVE COLLECTED OFFERINGS?

History tells us, both in the Bible and extra-biblical sources, that the church has collected offerings since its inception.

Looking at the activities of the very first church in the book of Acts, we are told that money was actively being



collected and distributed in and through the church. They “were of one heart and soul” and “had everything in common.” And “there was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need” (Acts 4:32–35).

Later, we see in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians that the early churches set aside funds for a collection in support of the suffering saints in Jerusalem. This was an example of coordinated collections for gospel purposes through the conduit of the church.

In Philippians (2:25–30 and 4:18), Paul holds up Epaphroditus as a model of a selfless, loving saint who risked his life to deliver a gift to Paul from his home church in Philippi—a gift collected by a church in partnership with their beloved founder and missionary.

In the book *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life* (A Collection of Historic Baptist Documents), several documents dating from 1697–1874 contain references to churches collecting offerings. The various writings lay out expectations for the churches to have regular contributions in order to support their pastors, help the poor and distressed, and provide for the church buildings.

Our American ancestors in the faith had the same concerns we do today. They wanted a roof under which they could gather: “Each church must have a ‘local habitation.’” Then and now, this requires “money for its procurement, fitting up, and comfortable appliances for preaching and the duties of the flock.” In addition, these believers longed to help churches that simply did not have sufficient resources. Thus, they encouraged giving to support the help of “destitute churches.” At Mount Vernon, we strive in so many ways to “serve other churches” in the spirit of this kind of outward concern. All giving was for the purposes of “contributing to the spread of the gospel, at home and abroad,” and distributions to poor saints within the congregations (page 157).

Clearly, collecting offerings for missions, the poor and needy, and the support of the local church ministry was the common practice of the Christian church since its inception.

## HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS THINK THROUGH THEIR GIVING PORTFOLIO? LOCAL CHURCH VERSUS PARACHURCH?

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives*

*generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

*James 1:5*

We hope you are committed to prioritizing your giving to the local church. But maybe you are struggling to think through how *exactly* to divide up your giving to the many worthy causes in front of you. Early in our marriage, when Connie and I served on the full-time staff of CRU, it was their policy for all staff members to raise their own financial support. In doing so, we had to build and maintain a significant, stable donor base. God provided for our needs throughout our time of service through the generosity and faithfulness of our donors. As I mentioned before, this was a real opportunity to practice *not* being anxious!

Since that time, and because of our experience as CRU staff members, we have continued to support numerous parachurch ministries that are committed to the furtherance of the gospel. But as our commitment to the local church has grown, we have also experienced a significant shift in our giving priorities. We have been convicted that the largest percentage of our giving should go to the local church.

Do you have this same conviction? If not, ask yourself why not. You may need to ask God to change your desires and priorities. Assuming you are committed to giving to the local church, here are a few guidelines for giving to parachurch ministries:

- ♦ **PRAY AND SEEK GOD’S WISDOM.** We are dependent on the Lord for every decision. And even though we know we won’t get a memo from God with a specific answer, let’s pray God leads us.
- ♦ **ASSESS THE STRENGTH OF THE GOSPEL WORK.** In other words, we want support ministries committed to evangelism. You can explore how the parachurch ministry you are thinking of supporting helps to further the Great Commission through its benevolent work (e.g., mercy ministries such as crisis pregnancy centers, homeless shelters, or food banks).
- ♦ **EXPECT FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY.** Be sure the ministry is being a good steward of the funds being entrusted to it. For example, many non-profits are accredited by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (EFCA.com).
- ♦ **SEEK COUNSEL.** God has given you friends and church members you trust. Seek godly advice from them. “Listen to advice and accept instruction, that

you may gain wisdom in the future” (Prov. 19:20).

Remember that giving has always been a form of worship, and in the Bible, we are continually encouraged to honor and glorify God in this way: “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:28). Remember, as you give to the local church and beyond, you are partnering with believers in the Great Commission. This is both an honor and a joy.

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS AT MOUNT VERNON OF ONLINE GIVING AND OUR INCREASINGLY CASHLESS SOCIETY?

My (Jack’s) kids, who are in their late 20s and early 30s, never carry cash because they pay for most everything with their phones, payment apps like Venmo or Zelle, or by various other electronic means. Many younger people don’t even have checkbooks! My about-to-be son-in-law told me he has only written two checks in the last five years.

While the passing of the offering plate was a wonderful reminder of our need to give back to our Lord and to show our gratitude for his generosity and kindness in our lives, it is becoming extinct in most churches. Cash and checks are not likely to make a comeback. They are relics of a bygone era. The cultural reality that many people nowadays simply don’t like touching something that someone else has touched adds another nail in the coffin of this venerable tradition.

Today at Mount Vernon, nearly 72% of those who give do so via online giving!

Absent the visible reminder of passing the offering plate, churches should consider creative ways to highlight generous giving on Sunday mornings. Frequent Wednesday evening classes on financial stewardship—help and discipleship with managing one’s affairs and reducing debt—are needed in today’s environment of easy credit and hyper-consumerism. But we also need teaching on the biblical theology of money that challenges our worldly posture toward money. In the normal course of preaching through books of the Bible, we could intentionally explore key texts like 1 Corinthians 16:1–3, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, or Matthew 6:21–24.

In other words, since there are many passages in the Bible that touch on financial giving, we should expect this topic to be addressed regularly from the pulpit. Regular exhortations to give, frequent prayers for generosity, and simply asking God to provide for our needs through his

people should be part of the rhythm of our life together as a local church.

Some may ask if we are obligated, by Scripture, to collect an offering each week. Pastors Michael Lawrence and Mark Dever argue Scripture “strongly suggests” a connection between financial giving to ministry and the Sunday gathering since Paul urged a collection for the saints in Jerusalem to be taken up by the church in Corinth on “the first day of every week” (1 Cor. 16:2). If so, some kind of collection is an *element* of our corporate worship service—a part of public worship Scripture demands.

If you hear a pastor instructing you how to give online or simply encouraging you to be faithful in giving on Sunday morning, don’t assume you are being singled out or that our church is trying to harp on money. We simply want to promote a biblical culture of generosity, and that requires words. Furthermore, we want to be faithful to the possibility that there is a connection between giving to church ministry and gathering as a church. So don’t be surprised if you hear about giving during the welcome and announcements, or find a QR code in the bulletin that links to our giving app. Consider it the modern-day offering plate (and don’t forget the giving baskets in the foyer)! We can expect to hear prayers asking the Lord to provide through his people for his ministry during Sunday morning and evening services.

As Christians (and as a church), we should not be embarrassed about asking members to give, and we shouldn’t be offended by being asked to give. Remember all those passages about giving in the Bible? Giving is a blessing, and it’s part of being a local church together.

## CONCLUSION

While passing the plate isn’t mandated in the Scriptures, generous, sacrificial, eager, willful, decisive, and proportional giving is modeled and expected for everyone who loves and follows Jesus. How we handle God’s money reflects whom or what we worship. If you are struggling in the area of financial giving, seek ways to grow in your faith and trust in God. That’s where it starts. If you are a poor steward and don’t manage money well, Mount Vernon has many brothers and sisters who will come alongside you and teach you how to manage your affairs better. This matter of financial giving is of profound eternal importance. Please make this a discipline for the sake of your own soul’s eternal happiness.

— Jim Heiskell & Jack Lupas



## Reading the Bible and Praying in Public

Written by Stuart Olyott

This book is a brief guide that explores the importance of the public reading of Scripture and prayer in the context of corporate church worship. The author emphasizes the importance of these practices as a vital means by which Christians commune with God and foster spiritual growth within the church.

Olyott asserts that what we believe about the Bible will profoundly impact how we read it publicly. As such, Olyott highlights some essential beliefs about the Bible, such as its divine origin, infallibility, inerrancy, and sufficiency. From these beliefs, he draws numerous practical insights and tips for the compelling public reading of Scripture. He stresses the need for reverence, clarity, appropriate tone, expression, and an understanding of the text. He also encourages readers to approach the task with humility and a deep sense of responsibility.

However, he notes that the public reading of Scripture represents a solemn moment in the worship service where the church hears from her head—Christ. He argues that headship and authority are essential themes during the public reading of Scripture in a church gathering, much like preaching or teaching. As such, he argues that the church should limit this task to qualified men. I believe limiting the preaching and teaching of the Word during corporate worship to qualified men is aligned with Scripture. I have, however, never considered whether the public reading of Scripture falls into this same category. I will need to study this more to form my convictions.

On public prayer, Olyott underscores its power in connecting believers with God, encouraging them, and cultivating unity within the church. He offers guidance concerning structuring prayers, emphasizing the importance of authenticity, a humble reliance on the Holy Spirit, and a heartfelt approach when addressing God. He also stresses that public prayer should be didactic, pastoral, fresh, and based on the foundation of a vibrant private prayer life. The author closes the book by addressing common challenges and misconceptions about public Scripture reading and prayer.

In conclusion, this book is a valuable resource for individuals seeking to understand the profound impact of public Scripture reading and prayer. Olyott's insights and practical advice will help believers perform and participate in these sacred tasks better.

— Recommended by Nana Agyekum



### Excerpts from the Book

## 1

Eye contact is an essential part of good reading. If you don't catch the eye of people without Bibles, it is probably because you do not truly believe that the reading is for them.

– "The Public Reading of Scripture" p. 8

## 2

In our private prayer, we all know that we have to 'pray until we pray.' That is not something we can do in public prayer, so we need to 'pray until we pray' in private beforehand. Then, when we come to lead in prayer in public, we will already be in the spirit of prayer

– "Public Prayer" p. 14

## 3

Public prayer often pries open the locked heart, re-activates the conscience, provokes secret weeping, and woos wandering children to return to their waiting Father. It does this by being pastoral.

– "Public Prayer" p. 20

## The Creedal Imperative

Written by Carl R. Trueman

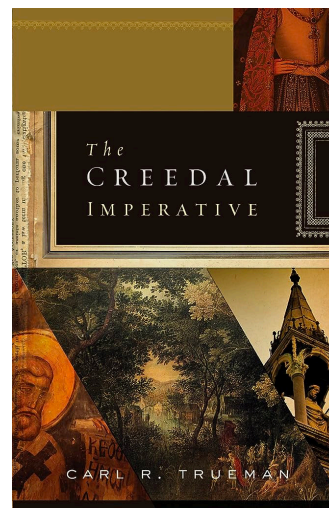
Creeds and confessions are human attempts at summarizing central Biblical teachings. Have you ever wondered why we often recite historic creeds during the Sunday morning gathering? In *The Creedal Imperative*, Carl Trueman makes the case that creeds and confessions are required by Scripture and offer enormous practical benefit to the church's mission of proclaiming the gospel and passing it down to the next generation. My two main takeaways from this book are as follows:

*Christians should be aware of the cultural forces that stand in opposition to creeds and confessions.* I'll list three examples here. First, while the forward-looking nature of science and technology might persuade us that we have little use for the past, creeds require us to humbly acknowledge that we have much to learn from thoughtful Christians who have gone before us. Second, our culture might insist that words are inadequate to express truth, but creeds affirm that God himself has spoken and has given us language as a means of communicating truth across time and space. Third, the world around us is often skeptical of authority, but creeds require a proper submission to the authority of the church and her office bearers. If a Christian is opposed to creeds and confessions, it might be due to the influence of secular cultural forces.

*Creeds and confessions provide an opportunity for the church's theology to be tested against Scripture.* While some churches teach "no creed but the Bible," Truman argues that all Christians and all churches engage in confessional synthesis. The key difference is whether such confessions are written down. A private confession in the mind of a church leader is not open to correction, but a public confession that is written down positions itself for evaluation so other Christians can carefully assess whether those understandings are consistent with Scripture. Creeds and confessions are one way the church maintains sound doctrine.

I read *The Creedal Imperative*, having never thought carefully about whether creeds and confessions are Biblical, and this book convinced me that such documents are Biblical imperatives, essential to the health of the church, and wonderful elements of the corporate worship gathering. If you're eager to learn more about the history and benefit of creeds and confessions, I hope you'll consider reading this book and be reminded of God's faithfulness to preserve his gospel.

— Recommended by Matt Gerber



### Excerpts from the Book

## 1

Of course, it is clear from a study of Christianity that there is a sense in which doctrine develops. This is not to say that the gospel has changed; but the way the gospel is articulated has undergone elaboration.

— "Classical Protestant Confessions" p. 117

## 2

Hymns are usually the product of a single person; our prayers are the products of our own religious self-consciousness; but the great creeds of the church are corporate products which have been tried and tested by the church across the world and down through the centuries.

— "Confession as Praise" p. 150

## 3

Paul's charge to Timothy was not that he should innovate or take his primary cue from the surrounding culture; rather it was that he should hold fast to the form of sound words that he had been taught by the apostle.

— "On the Usefulness of Creeds and Confessions" p. 181

# OCTOBER

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!

<b>October 1</b>	<b>Romans 8:1–11</b>	October 17	Romans 9:14–18
October 2	Romans 8:1–17	October 18	Romans 9:19–29
October 3	Romans 8:18–30	October 19	Rom. 9:30–10:4
October 4	Romans 8:31–39	October 20	Ecclesiastes 1:1–11
October 5	Romans 9:1–5	October 21	Romans 10:5–13
October 6	Exodus 4:18–31	<b>October 22</b>	<b>Romans 8:18–25</b>
October 7	Romans 9:6–13	October 23	Hebrews 4:12–16
<b>October 8</b>	<b>Romans 8:12–17</b>	October 24	Hebrews 1
October 9	2 Timothy 2:1–5	October 25	Hebrews 2
October 10	2 Timothy 1	October 26	Hebrews 3
October 11	2 Timothy 2	October 27	Leviticus 16:1–34
October 12	2 Timothy 3	October 28	Hebrews 4
October 13	Joshua 1:1–18	<b>October 29</b>	<b>Hebrews 4:12–16</b>
October 14	2 Timothy 4	October 30	Romans 8:26–27
<b>October 15</b>	<b>2 Timothy 2:1–5</b>	October 31	Romans 10:14–21
October 16	Romans 8:18–25		

\*Sermons in bold

# TAKE UP & READ

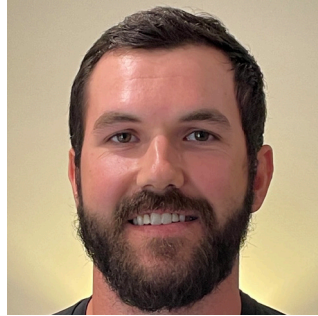


# NEW MEMBERS

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Luke  
Davis



Matt  
Flynn



Christopher  
Hoffman



Madison  
Reike



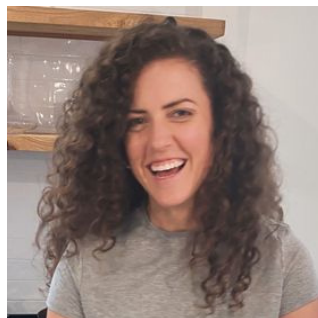
Caroline  
Reike



Matt  
Tillman



Abbey  
Tillman



Katherine  
Wabler



Emma  
Young



*Mount Vernon*  
BAPTIST CHURCH