

How Much, How Often —

by Robert F. Turner

There is nothing more completely opposed to the true spirit of Christianity than the attitude back of the questions, "How much, how many, how often, must I serve the Lord?" It is appalling that some would argue such.

Years back a man handed me a paper which listed his income, rent, food bill, utilities, etc.; and said, "Now you have the facts. Tell me, **how much** must I give to the Lord?" I asked if he thought he should visit the sick, help the needy; and when he said he did, I asked, "**How often?**"

He seemed a bit puzzled, so I suggested 50 times per week — and he thought he would do well to get in that many calls. But I persisted: "On Saturday afternoon when you have just made your fiftieth call and are on your way home, you meet a brother who is destitute, obviously worthy, and you have the means to assist him. Do you say, 'I'm sorry I can not help you now. I have made my 50 for this week — but hang on, drink water, and I'll see you first thing Monday.'" (?) How does one measure service that is patterned after God's love for us?

If a fellow just **must** have figures or percents, he should be given them from the scriptures; like 100% — "*all that she had, even all her living*" (Mark 12:44). Or, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). *Are you amazed?* (Matthew 19:25f)

A genuine Christian does not dole out an hour or two, a few dollars, or a pound of mercy for God. He first **gives himself** (2 Corinthians 8:5; Matthew 16:24) and from then on his service is limited only by ability and opportunity. That's the meaning of "*as prospered*" (1 Corinthians 16:2) i.e., in keeping with what God has given you. God gave life to Stephen, and when the service of God called for it, Stephen gave it back to God (Acts 7:59).

When Jesus said, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*" (Matthew 22:37), He left no place for "and 10% of thy money, and one hour per week of thy time." I believe Jesus will go fishing with you (Luke 5:4f); but don't forget, you are doing it on **His** time.

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