



Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text

Exodus 25:1-9; 35:21-29; 36:3-7

Topic

The hearts of the Israelites are stirred
to give willingly to the construction of the Tabernacle

Title

“Stirred Before Serving”

Why “shaken, not stirred?”

You don’t need to be a fan of James Bond to recognize that phrase as his preferred recipe for a martini. But why?

A biographer of Bond’s creator, Ian Fleming, said that he liked his martinis shaken, not stirred, because Fleming thought that stirring a drink diminished its flavor.

Some things do need to be stirred before serving. Recipes may suggest that you “stir occasionally,” or they may insist that you “stir constantly.”

The Israelites camped at Mount Sinai were stirred before serving:

Exo 35:21 Then everyone came whose heart was **stirred**, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the LORD's offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.

Their “hearts [were] stirred,” and as a result their “[spirit’s] were willing” to serve the Lord by bringing freewill offerings to be used for the building of the Tabernacle.

The stirring and their willingness were so incredible that the builders say, in chapter thirty-six, “The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the LORD commanded *us* to do.” So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, "Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary." And the people were restrained from bringing” (v5-6).

They were so stirred-up that their giving exceeded the need.

We can discuss our own giving to the Lord from these verses, as long as we keep in mind that this was a one-time building project, and not the pattern for regular offerings.

What is much more beneficial is to focus our attention on what it means to be “stirred,” and to then serve “willingly.” Those underlying characteristics can affect more than just our giving. They can affect everything in our walk with God.

Perhaps the best way to approach this topic is to ask two subjective questions: #1 Can You Say That Your Heart Is Stirred?, and #2 Can You See That Your Spirit Is Willing?

#1 Can You Say That Your Heart Is Stirred?

(25:1-9)

Let's start by pointing out that stirring the heart isn't something for backsliders. **It's for you who are spiritual.**

I say that because the apostle Paul wrote to young Pastor Timothy, telling him, "to **stir up** the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (Second Timothy 1:6).

Timothy wasn't in sin; he hadn't backslid. He was a veteran missionary currently busy serving the Lord as a local pastor. If he needed occasional or constant heart-stirring, so do we.

Exo 25:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

Exo 25:2 "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.

We read in verse nine that the offering was for the building of the Tabernacle. Chapters 25-31 and 35-40 all deal with the plans for the Tabernacle. That's a lot of ink devoted to one subject.

We'll talk about its design and its symbolism in those chapters. Today we are concentrating on the offerings that made its construction possible.

It was a free-will offering. God did not constrain anyone to give. He didn't tell Moses to guilt the people into giving.

In fact, it reads as if He was restricting the offerings to only those that were voluntary, given willingly from the heart.

Every local church has to determine its approach to receiving offerings. While some churches seem to always be soliciting from their members, others may not even receive an offering, having boxes set-up where members can put their donations.

Our own approach is to talk about giving when the topic comes up in the Bible study - like today. We want to teach with clarity so that you can make your own determination about giving as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Taking into account all the various approaches churches adopt, the statistics on giving (in America) are actually pretty pathetic.

Before I mention a few stats, I need to say a word about tithing. "Tithe" means 10%. Tithing is giving 10% of your gross income to your church. It is often used as a baseline for giving. If it was good enough for Abraham and the patriarchs, it must be good enough for us, or so the argument goes.

How are we - the church in America - doing with regard to tithing? Here are a few conclusions that some of the polls and studies have published:

- Those who give 10% make up only 10-25% of the average congregation (Christianity Today).
- Fully 80% of Americans give only 2% of their income to the church (Church Development). By comparison, during the Great Depression, Americans gave 3.3% of their income to the church (ChurchLeaders).

- Among Christian families making less than \$20,000.00 annually, 8% tithe (HRF).
- Among families making above \$75,000.00 annually, just 1% tithe (HRF).
- 37% of regular attendees give nothing to their church (HRF).
- The average amount given by adults who attend Protestant churches is \$17.00 per week (HRF).

Everything is, of course, relative to your particular situation. But in general the stats on free will giving tell a selfish, not a sacrificial, story.

After listing some statistics like that, Relevant Magazine asked the question, “What would happen if the church tithed?”

Their answer: “If believers were to increase their giving to a minimum of, let’s say, 10 percent... There would be an additional \$165 billion for churches to use and distribute. The global impact would be phenomenal.”

Here’s just a few things they suggested the church could do with the kind of money:

- \$25 billion could relieve global hunger, starvation and deaths from preventable diseases in five years.
- \$12 billion could eliminate illiteracy in five years.
- \$15 billion could solve the world’s water and sanitation issues, specifically at places in the world where 1 billion people live on less than \$1 per day.
- \$1 billion could fully fund all overseas mission work.
- \$100 – \$110 billion would still be left over for additional ministry expansion.

The New Testament doesn't teach tithing as a commandment or as a requirement. It gives us *principles* - not *percentages*.

There are three key principles:

1. God expects believers to give cheerfully (Second Corinthians 9:7).
 2. He expects believers to give regularly (First Corinthians 16:2), and,
 3. He encourages believers to give sacrificially (Mark 12:41-44).
- If giving to the church is supposed to be “cheerful,” we probably shouldn't coerce it by making believers feel guilty. We should leave it up to each Christian as a matter of their free will. Thus our approach to discuss it when it comes up in our studying the Bible.
 - If giving to the church is supposed to be “regular,” we ought to offer as many ways as possible for believers to give regularly. We take a live offering every Sunday; there are offering boxes; many of you have set up automatic payments to Calvary Hanford from your checking account; you can give through *PayPal* on our website; we're currently working on having a giving Kiosk in the Bookstore.
 - Giving is supposed to be “sacrificial.” This is where it gets subjective. **You and the Lord need to work out what is sacrificial in your situation.** All I can say is that, given the stats we presented, “sacrificial” certainly does not describe most of the giving going on in American churches.

This is the takeaway: You don't have to tithe, but you're expected to give cheerfully, regularly, and sacrificially.

Exo 25:3 And this *is* the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze;

Exo 25:4 blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, fine linen, and goats' *hair*;

Exo 25:5 ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood;

Exo 25:6 oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense;

Exo 25:7 onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.

We're not really set-up to receive your "ram skins dyed red." Or most of the other items on this list. But, then again, you don't have most of these things to give, either.

Exo 25:8 And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

There are three Hebrew words for the "sanctuary" we most commonly call the Tabernacle. The first is *mishkan*, which means 'a dwelling-place.' It is used in 25:9, and is stated in 25:8 as the explicit purpose for which the tabernacle was to be erected: "that I may dwell among them."

A second word for the Tabernacle is the word *miqdosh*, which is used in 25:8 and means a 'holy (place).' The Tabernacle was holy, as its two parts testify; one of these was termed the 'Holy Place' and the other the 'Most Holy Place,' or the 'Holy of Holies.'

Thirdly, the Tabernacle is referred to as a 'tent,' the *ohel mo'ed*, or 'tent of meeting.'

God delights to dwell among His people:

- He walked with Adam in the Garden of Eden.
- He visited, and dined with, Abraham.
- He wrestled with Jacob.
- He spoke to Moses from the burning bush, and to the people from Mount Sinai.

Now He proposed a moveable “dwelling place” among His people. Later, His stationary dwelling place would be the Temple in Jerusalem - made in the same “pattern” as the Tabernacle.

Then God would come to earth, God Incarnate, God in human flesh. The apostle John said of Jesus “The Word (Jesus) became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). It could be translated, “He **tabernacled** among us.”

Today the dwelling of God on earth is the church. We, collectively, are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. We are living stones, being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22).

Jesus will at any moment come for His church - resurrecting the dead in Christ while rapturing living believers. After the seven year Great Tribulation, and the one thousand year Millennial Kingdom, He will create new heavens and a new earth wherein God will dwell with His people in glory forever (Revelation 21:3-4).

Exo 25:9 According to all that I show you, *that is*, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make *it*.

God told Israel what He was going to do; and He told them the part they could play in it. He set the stage for them to respond.

Jump ahead to Exodus 35:21.

Exo 35:21 Then everyone came whose heart was stirred...

In chapter thirty-five we read about some of the Israelites. It says, "Then everyone whose heart was stirred..."

There were those among them who's hearts were stirred to serve the Lord by giving the things He had requested.

God desired to dwell among them, and many were excited to do everything they could to aid and abet Him.

The wording implies that there were two responses. Some had hearts that were stirred; some did not have their hearts stirred. God was the same to both types of heart. The unstirred hearts could have been stirred.

There are as many reasons why some hearts were not stirred as there are hearts. Selfishness... Greed... Idolatry... Bitterness... Just about anything could settle in the heart as a sludge that defied stirring.

The rich young ruler that Jesus encountered in the New Testament might be a good example. He seemed to have a sincere desire to follow Jesus, and to serve Him. But when the Lord asked him to sell all his possessions, and told him he'd have treasure in Heaven, we read, "But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich" (Luke 18:23).

Maybe the best thing we can do is ask the question of ourselves, “Can I say that my heart is stirred?” Ask it - but with the Lord to answer you. He who said truthfully to the busy Ephesians, “Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works” (Revelation 2:4-5), He will tell you if your heart is stirred or settled.

No one wants to say, “My heart is not stirred. I’m happy to live in sludge that has settled there.” No one wants to be labeled “Stir lazy.” Trust the Lord to reveal your heart to you.

#2 Can You See That Your Spirit Is Willing?

(35:21-29; 36:4-7)

Speaking of James Bond - Sean Connery really owns that role. Overall I think he was better playing Malone in *The Untouchables*.

“What are you prepared to do?” was the question he asked Kevin Costner’s version of Eliot Ness.

“Everything within the law,” answered Ness.

“And then what?” countered Malone. “You must be prepared to go all the way... [Capone] pulls a knife, you pull a gun. He sends one of yours to the hospital, you send one of his to the morgue. That’s the Chicago way, and that’s how you get Capone. Are you ready to do that?”

The stirring of your heart implies a readiness to act. The willingness of the spirit is shown in taking action.

In a moment we'll see the Israelites in action. First I want to acknowledge that a lot of important stuff happens in the chapters that we've skipped - including the infamous incident with the Golden Calf.

We *will* go back and study them; we're not skipping them entirely. Right now, however, we're following this thread of giving to the building of the Tabernacle.

Exo 35:21 Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, *and* they brought the LORD's offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.

Heart-stirred means spirit-willing, which means you take action and serve the Lord as He has asked. In the case of Israel camped at Mount Sinai, it was to bring to Him the offerings He had requested for the building project.

Projects can rightfully stir the heart, leading your willing spirit to step-up and serve. When we purchased this building, we saw a lot of that. Guys and gals with specific skills came in and did demolition, construction, installation, and finish work.

They still do. In fact, anytime we announce something special, you step-up, and it's a blessing.

But you don't need a particular project to have a willing spirit. **The church is an on-going building project; it will not be completed until Jesus comes for us, to resurrect the dead and rapture living believers.**

The apostle Peter said, “Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding *you*,” (Second Peter 1:13).

Peter taught believers the Word thinking it would stir them up to press forward in their normal activities - Praying, studying the Word, fellowshiping with believers, and sharing their faith in Jesus.

The writer to the Hebrew Christians said, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works...” (10:24). Those are on-going, everyday projects - “love and good works.”

There is always a call, from God, to serve - to offer yourself as a living sacrifice.

We shouldn't need a special project; we have one; **we are one.**

Exo 35:22 They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart, *and* brought earrings and nose rings, rings and necklaces, all jewelry of gold, that is, every man who *made* an offering of gold to the LORD.

Exo 35:23 And every man, with whom was found blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, fine linen, goats' *hair*, red skins of rams, and badger skins, brought *them*.

Exo 35:24 Everyone who offered an offering of silver or bronze brought the LORD's offering. And everyone with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought *it*.

Exo 35:25 All the women *who were* gifted artisans spun yarn with their hands, and brought what they had spun, of blue, purple, *and* scarlet, and fine linen.

Exo 35:26 And all the women whose hearts stirred with wisdom spun yarn of goats' *hair*.

Exo 35:27 The rulers brought onyx stones, and the stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate,
Exo 35:28 and spices and oil for the light, for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense.

Just a few observations:

- “They came, both men and women.” That’s as it should be - but often men are absent from church life. It’s a little dated, but in 2006 Biola University published an article titled, *The Feminization of the Church*. It dealt with what they identified as a centuries-old mystery: Why there are generally more women than men in every type of church, in every part of the world. Christian men who are absent from church definitely need to be stirred-up.
- They gave material goods, but also offered their skills, as we read they, “spun yarn of goats hair.” Everyone can contribute something. Maybe you can’t give money; you can serve. Or maybe you are stirred to do both.
- “The rulers” also contributed. Everyone has their function in the Lord’s house, and while some are leaders, all are equal.

Exo 35:29 The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to the LORD, all the men and women whose hearts were willing to bring *material* for all kinds of work which the LORD, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done.

There was “all kinds of work which the Lord... had commanded to be done.”

There still is all kinds of work to be done in and through the church. By “church,” I mean each of us, as the living stones that comprise it.

A lot of times folks will come and say that God has laid something on their heart; that He has stirred their heart about something. While we might be able to come alongside and help, if it's you God has stirred, *it's usually **you** who needs to take action.*

Skip ahead to 36:3.

Exo 36:3 And they received from Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of making the sanctuary. So they continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning.

“They” are the craftsmen charged with the construction of the Tabernacle. The offerings came in to Moses, and he got them to the appropriate builders.

Previously we've read in the Book of Exodus that a lot of Moses' time had been occupied with hearing disputes, and adjudicating matters of conflict between Israelites. He did this all day - from morning until evening.

What a welcome relief from that drudgery to instead be receiving the freewill offerings of stirred hearts whose spirit was willing to serve.

It's typical of being stirred-up that your focus becomes more on important matters. More spiritual matters. Instead of demanding your pound of flesh from others, you refuse to yield to your own flesh.

Exo 36:4 Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work he was doing,

Exo 36:5 and they spoke to Moses, saying, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the LORD commanded *us* to do."

What a great problem to have - too many resources.

In the recent Marvel film, *Infinity War*, Thanos is on a mission to eliminate half the population of the universe. He's trying to solve the problem of too few resources to maintain the over-population of planets. After collecting all six infinity stones, he randomly annihilates folks with the snap of his fingers.

If you've got that kind of power literally at your fingertips, why not use it to create more resources? That's what Dr. Carol Markus did in the *StarTrek* universe, in *The Wrath of Kahn*. Her Genesis device turned barren planets into veritable gardens of Eden.

Of course, in *The Search for Spock* you learn that the planet was also unstable. But, hey - she tried.

Anyway... The Israelites exceeded bringing the materials that were needed.

Exo 36:6 So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, "Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary." And the people were restrained from bringing,
Exo 36:7 for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done - indeed too much.

Churches (and other non-profits) often put up a visual, like a thermometer, to show the progress towards achieving the financial goal.

Can someone tell me why a busted thermometer motivates giving?

Moses sent a proclamation through the camp, but it appears folks kept coming anyway, until he restrained them from bringing.

I mentioned the Relevant Magazine article on what would happen if the church tithed. Another source suggested that \$2.5billion would fully fund the Great Commission. They said, "We have the resources to put a Bible in everyone's hands and literally tell the world about Jesus. Think of the impact a small sacrifice from everyone could make."

I want to stress, however, **that this is not about money**; not primarily. It is about having stirred hearts and willing spirits to take action to serve the Lord. That action might include giving more to Him. But there are a lot of other things that would occur as well.

Bottom line: You can **see** if your spirit is willing by taking a look at your serving.

When Paul exhorted Timothy to stir up his gift, he went on to say, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (Second Timothy 1:7). It implies that Timothy was a little shaken by criticisms and other difficulties.

The Lord's church should be stirred, not shaken, by the times in which we live. The ultimate answer to the many issues overwhelming the world is Jesus. We know Him, so let's serve Him, and by playing our part as living stones, introduce Him to the world.

