



HOW MUCH WOULD YOU GIVE AWAY?

Jesus said in Matthew 24:42 (NASB), ‘Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.’ But what if we could know when the Lord was returning? Just for the sake of discussion, let’s suppose that we could somehow know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was coming back exactly one year from today. If we knew this with complete certainty, how much of our material blessings would we give away over the next year?

If our answer to the last question is different from how much we are actually planning to give in the next twelve months, it might be good to ask ourselves why. Why would the amount I would give this year be different just because Jesus was coming back in one year instead of twenty years, or after I am already long gone? Chances are, our giving would be higher if we knew Jesus was coming back soon. There may be a number of reasons why, and it might be a good mental exercise to contemplate what those reasons are.

Reason #1: Could it be that we would be willing to make much greater material sacrifices since it would only be one short year before we would eternally relocate? In the grander scheme of eternity, twelve months is a pretty insignificant time frame. People who exercise regularly say that they are able to endure much greater physical “torture” because they know that their workout is only going to last for, say, 45 minutes, and then they can go back to a more comfortable and less demanding lifestyle. We seem to be far more willing to give something up for *Lent* than we are to give it up for *life*. We can endure many things if we know the time is limited. Might your giving increase if there was only one year left?

Reason #2: With just one year remaining, might our giving amount be different because, as the old hymn says, “the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace?” As the new heaven and the new earth get closer and closer, this old one doesn’t seem quite so attractive. Think about the value of a Confederate dollar in 1861 (when the Civil War began) compared to the value of that dollar in the spring of 1865 (when the war and the Confederacy came to an end). After April of 1865, a Confederate dollar would be worthless to whoever held it. Giving Confederate dollars away just before the end of the war wouldn’t really be all that much of a gift, would it? Likewise, as the return of Christ moves closer, the “things of earth” grow more and more worthless to us because what we possess here will have absolutely no value in the next life.

That is what makes the picture of the streets in Heaven being paved with gold so humorous. Gold, which is universally valued here on earth, is used by God for street pavement in Heaven. What the world values *here* is worthless *there*; and conversely, what the world considers worthless here is priceless there. Might you be more inclined to give it all away if there was only one year left?

Reason #3: Would our giving increase because sending our financial resources on ahead would be much more appealing, knowing that we would be getting a much larger reward when we get to heaven in a very short time? Jesus tells us twice that giving *now* produces rewards *later*. He says in Matthew 6:20, 'But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.' He adds in Matthew 19:21, 'If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' Give now; be rewarded later!

We've all heard it said, "You can't take it with you." But the good news is, you can send it on ahead! If we knew that "ahead" would be only one year away and not decades or centuries away, would we see things differently? We might view the temporal "loss" of the enjoyment and security we get from these things, in comparison to the eternal gain, to be quite a compelling trade-off. Might your giving increase if there was only one year left?

Something very interesting seems to happen to our viewpoint when we shorten the timeline. How would things change for us if we knew there was only one year left of life as we know it? It's likely that we would view the world and our place in it from a totally new perspective, while the real priorities of life would become crystal-clear within our consciousness. We might find every area of our life quickly reshuffled, creating an entirely new order of priorities. Tellingly, these new life priorities often include very little of what currently consumes much of our daily routine right now.

In life the *tyranny of the urgent* is constantly seeking to override the *priority of the important*. The tyranny of the urgent is always making noise, demanding your attention, and insisting upon being addressed immediately. The priority of the important rarely makes any noise, seldom demands attention of any kind, and never insists that you address it. Yet the most important things in life are the ones that sit silently by, waiting to see if you will ever discover just how critically important they are, and whether you will give them the time and attention they desperately need.

We seem to devote significant amounts of time for the trivial and the unimportant, often because we mistakenly believe that there will always be time for getting to the "big stuff," the "really important stuff" later. Well, what if there is no "later?" What if there is no "next year?" As C.T. Studd said, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

If we only had one more year to impact the Kingdom with all that God has entrusted to us, would we be living and giving differently than we are right now? If so, it might be a good spiritual and mental exercise to take some time to recalibrate our priorities in order to reflect on an eternal mission instead of a merely temporal one. This will happen if you choose to adopt a shorter timeline rather than a longer one.

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