

Scrupulously Honest

Joe Slater

What would you do if you discovered that your employer was paying you more than what your contract stipulated – not because your employer was feeling generous, but because of a clerical error? That’s exactly what happened to San Francisco Giants pitcher Jeremy Affeldt. And this was no minor boo-boo. The error totaled \$500,000!

When Affeldt, who professes to be a Christian, noticed the error, he told the team’s assistant general manager, Bobby Evans, that he couldn’t keep the money, even though three knowledgeable people (including Evans) said the contract was iron-clad and he didn’t have to give the money back. “I can’t take that money,” Affeldt said. “I won’t sleep well at night knowing I took that money because every time I open my paycheck I’ll know it’s not right.

Some might think, “Well, that’s easy for him; he didn’t need the money anyway.” After all, he still makes \$4.75 million per year. But I submit the amount of his income is irrelevant. Wealthy people can be just as greedy as anyone else. His two-year contract called for him to be paid a total of \$10 million, including the mistaken bonus. So the \$500K he returned to the organization was 5% of his pay. How would you like to give back 5% of your total pay for the past two years?

Paul wrote, *“Have regard for good things in the sight of all people”* (Romans 12:17). Even worldly people have to admire someone who does what Jeremy Affeldt did. They might sneer and say, “He’s crazy to give back ½ million dollars,” but they still admire him. People notice what you do, and they pay particular attention if they know you wear the name of Christ. Anything related to money draws attention. Christians must be scrupulously honest. We should do that anyway because we know it is God’s will and that He is watching.

A Pearl Finder

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45-46, ESV).

What do you want for God’s church? To put it another way, what are you willing to give up and do to make that happen? It is easy to wish for great attendance, a spiritual worship service, beautiful singing, a sermon that moves me, prayers that voice my deepest yearnings, and fellowship that lifts my spirits.

There is a difference between “What I want **from** God’s church” and “What I want **for** God’s church. “**From** God’s church” suggests that a member fills a place on a pew when he feels inclined. He listens to the sermon that was preached for someone else. Perhaps he sings if he feels like it. Maybe his mind follows the words of the prayers that are said, or his thoughts may drift elsewhere.

On the other hand, “**For** God’s church” implies that a member is doing something to advance God’s kingdom. He is present at every given opportunity if he can be. He teaches a class, sings with gusto, embedding the words in his heart. He eagerly hears the sermon, learning from God and searching for gems that he can use in his Christian walk. The prayers sink deep into his heart, and he also call on God’s help for the lost, the ill, and those who need help. When worship is over and he goes home, he uses what he has heard and learned to help others.

Are we actively searching for the pearl of great price? Are we mere spectators, or are we helping God’s kingdom grow in ourselves and in others? May we bear fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10).

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)

Jesus Saved Me From My Sins

“She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21 ESV).

I didn’t grow up in a family that was godly. What I knew about Jesus I learned by watching Christmas specials on TV. I grew up a “spoiled rotten” kid, who always got what he wanted. As a result, I was very self-centered, and everything was for my wants and pleasures. I had done a lot of stuff by age twenty that I knew was wrong.

I was looking forward to the freedom that came with reaching twenty-one. At the same time, I was beginning to realize that there might be more to life. Just what that was, I didn’t know.

When two of my good friends got married, I started talking with the minister, which led to a series of studies. He introduced me to Jesus, and I discovered what was missing in life. I learned that I was a sinner and what that meant, and that Jesus took my punishment for me. I gratefully accepted His gift when I believed and rose from my baptism into a new life.

By God’s grace, I am saved from the eternal consequences of my sins. Paul said, *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh by faith in the Son of God, who gave Himself up for me”* (Galatians 2:20).

Like Paul, I have striven to live for Christ and to serve Him in His mission of reconciliation. Knowing what I was before, I am grateful and blessed to be His. I encourage you to do the same and remember what you were before you were redeemed. Never forget the cost paid for your salvation.

--Ed Wittlif (Denver, CO)