

## “Leftovers”

Where I came from, and without other distinguishing contextual clues, “leftovers” referred to food that was “leftover” from the previous meal, or more often, the previous day’s meal. Like most kids, I didn’t really like “leftovers”- after all, if the meal had been something that we really liked the first time around, there wouldn’t be anything “leftover” for the next go around with four kids at the table! However as I matured a little (and all the other siblings moved out on their own), I found that “leftovers” got a lot better! This was especially true of some of the spicier dishes Mom prepared. A night in the fridge seemed to allow those flavorings to ruminate and ripen to provide an even richer bouquet for the palate! But, though I now relish “leftovers”...

**God doesn’t!** Think back to His instructions to and interactions with ancient Israel:

- Although He required only 1/10<sup>th</sup> of their blessings as sacrifices, it had to be from the *best* of the *first fruits* rather than the “leftovers,” Mal.1:8-11;
- He only commanded that 1/7<sup>th</sup> of their days to be dedicated to worship, spiritual reflection, and rest, but He was deadly serious about its observance (the Lord commanded a violator to be “stoned... to death,” and he was!), Num.15:32-36;
- He always has demanded “*wholehearted*” commitment to Him, Deut.6:4-5; Mark 12:32-33 (as well as “*all*” of our *minds*, *strength*, and *souls!*), and has never tolerated receiving the “leftovers” of any aspect of ourselves.

And yet, apparently modern Christianity hasn’t learned these lessons of the past since we are prone to give Jehovah God our “**leftovers**” of our:

- **Time.** We’re so “busy” with work, recreation, the kids’ extra-curricular activities, other family commitments, and even “down time” that we wind up giving Him only the “leftovers.”
- **Hearts** (and minds, strengths, and souls!). Simply put, most of us are emotionally committed to our lives and families that God gets only the “leftovers” of our hearts... though we still sing about being “wholeheartedly” devoted to Him.
- **Blessings.** Though the NT does NOT specify an exact percentage of financial prosperity (and neither am I), are we really “sacrificing” or just giving back to Him the “leftovers.”
- **Commitment.** Think long, hard, and soberly about your “dedication” to God. Does He really come “first” in and throughout all aspects of your present life, or is He just getting the “leftovers” of your commitment(s)?

At the core of all of these areas of application is one basic problem: **We aren’t really willing to “sacrifice” ourselves, or really any part of “our” lives.** Instead, we content ourselves with giving God the “leftovers,” and expect Him to be pleased with our offering(s). We should know better. Biblical history teaches us better.

So listen to and think carefully about the words of King David from 2Sam.24:24, “... *I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing...*”. Isn’t that exactly what we’re doing when we give God the “leftovers”? Having taken all that WE want of our *hearts*, *time*, *commitments*, and *resources*, we’re willing to “*gratuitously*”

(see the alternate marginal reading by the NASB in 2Sam.24:24) give Him **that “*which cost(s) me nothing.*”** In order to be “*acceptable to God*” and offer any real “*spiritual service of worship*” to Him, we must instead “*present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice,*” Rom.12:1.

You and I may like “leftovers,” but God surely does not! We (you and me!) can do better. So let’s do better. (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at [vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com](http://vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com); email to [mrpcstrong@hotmail.com](mailto:mrpcstrong@hotmail.com))