

Ecclesiastes 7:7
For oppression makes a wise man mad,
And a bribe corrupts the heart.

As of this writing, I have traveled in 29 countries of the world, ministering the Gospel and teaching God's Holy, eternal, inerrant, written Word. In that time, I have never lied on my visa application (such as representing ourselves as tourists when we are there to proclaim Christ) nor given nor paid a bribe. I have been shouted at, I have had my bags thrown around, I have been delayed but I have never given a bribe. I share this not to boast but to emphasize that it is possible to do mission work without lying and paying bribes.



Bribery is defined by Black's Law Dictionary as “the offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of any item of value to influence the actions of an official, or other person, in charge of a public or legal duty. With regard to governmental operations, essentially, bribery is "Corrupt solicitation, acceptance, or transfer of value in exchange for official action."

Here in Texas bribery is defined in the Penal Code - PENAL § 36.02. Bribery

(a) A person commits an offense if he intentionally or knowingly offers, confers, or agrees to confer on another, or solicits, accepts, or agrees to accept from another:

- (1) any benefit as consideration for the recipient's decision, opinion, recommendation, vote, or other exercise of discretion as a public servant, party official, or voter;
- (2) any benefit as consideration for the recipient's decision, vote, recommendation, or other exercise of official discretion in a judicial or administrative proceeding;
- (3) any benefit as consideration for a violation of a duty imposed by law on a public servant or party official;

A missionary once told me, “A bribe is simply a tip given before the service rather than after.” This, of course, is a lie from Satan. The Word of God makes a clear distinction between wages – that which is paid for work, tips, which is the honor or reward to those who have performed a faithful service, and bribes – the sin of corrupting a heart to receive special favor or to subvert the law.

It is my personal feeling that the common practice of Christians here in the US to not just pay bribes but to offer bribes to government officials and police in foreign countries is a form of latent colonialism and racism. These same Christians who would not think of paying a bribe in the U.S. are more than willing to do so in third world countries – especially Latin America, Africa and Asia. I view the paying of bribes by Christians as a form of disdain for the very culture to which they are called to minister.

Now in saying this I differentiate between Bribery and Robbery. I was in a country where bribery was rife. The official at passport control asked for a bribe, when he persisted and I responded by quoting the Bible he held a gun to my chest and demanded, “Give me money!”. I surrendered money in my wallet but this was not a bribe, he was robbing me at gunpoint. Short of this however, to pay government officials to make one's life as a missionary easier is the sin of bribery. God the Holy Spirit makes this very clear in *Deuteronomy 16:19-20* “**You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. 20 "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you."** Missionaries who pay bribes care little that they are blinding the eyes of the wise and perverting the words of righteousness in the land to which they have come to live and minister. If it is a call from God, if God is giving them the land, Then “**Justice and only justice you shall pursue**”.

One of the things you will notice as you do these series of devotionals on bribery, is the impact bribes have on both the individual receiving them and the nation. The Word of God clearly states **Exodus 23:8** " *You shall not take a bribe , for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just.*" Spiritual blindness is the work of satan - **2 Corinthians 4:4** " *in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*" How those who claim to bring the light of the gospel to a nation can begin this ministry by bringing blindness to government officials is beyond me. Ecclesiastes 7:7 clearly states that " *a bribe corrupts the heart*" – that is true both in the one giving the bribe and the one receiving the bribe.

As you read of the great missionary heroes in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, you will not find one instance of the of giving bribes. In fact, just the opposite is true. I often ask, "If Paul paid bribes, then why did he spend so much time in prison?" Notice the account of Paul's life and character while he was imprisoned by Felix- **Acts 24:25-27** " *But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, 'Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.'* **26** *At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul ; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him.* **27** *But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned."*

Neither Paul, nor Peter, nor any of the heroes of faith are ever recorded as giving a bribe. When I am on a mission trip, I go to redeem the people, the country, the culture with the Gospel, not to blind and corrupt it.

Those who give bribes subvert the work of God. Had they not given the bribe they would be equipped with a great testimony of God's work in their ministry. Because of giving bribes they must either remain silent or must give evidence of their illegal activities as a missionary rather than a testimony of their faith.

Another important reason for not giving bribes is that you may open a door with the sin of a bribe which God desires to remain shut. **Acts 16:6** " *They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.*" God does indeed close doors. If things become difficult through persecution or disaster, it is important that the missionary know he is in the country by the work of God and not by that of satan. It is important to know he is in the country by faith and not by the sin of bribery. God makes it very clear, **2 Chronicles 19:7** " *Now then let the fear of the LORD be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe.*" God has no part in the taking of bribes. Once bribery takes place, you are on your own. I would rather stand with Paul's testimony that God had forbidden me to enter a country, than have the testimony, by lying on my visa application and corrupting my heart and the heart of the government officials, that I was able to enter the country.

A question which Eleanor and I ask of all ministers, missionaries or ministries soliciting money is, "Do you pay bribes?". We do not knowingly support any ministry which pays bribes and/or lies on their visa forms. If a missionary cannot do the work of the ministry without lying and paying bribes then he is unworthy of his calling.

Psalms 26:9-11

9 *Do not take my soul away along with sinners,
Nor my life with men of bloodshed,
10* *In whose hands is a wicked scheme,
And whose right hand is full of bribes .
11* *But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;
Redeem me, and be gracious to me.*

Rev. John S. Mahon
Director: Grace Community International
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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: Bribes Are a Sin

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Exodus 23:8

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Deuteronomy 16:19 & 20

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Deuteronomy 27:25 & 26

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: Bribes Are a Sin

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: I Samuel 12:3-5

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: II Chronicles 19:7

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Job 6:22

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: Bribes Are a Sin

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Psalm 15:1-5

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Proverbs 17:23

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Ecclesiastes 7:7

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: Bribes Are a Sin

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Isaiah 5:22-25

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Isaiah 33:15 & 16

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Micah 3:11 & 7:3

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: Bribes Are a Sin

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: I Samuel 8:1-3

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Psalm 26:8-10

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Proverbs 15:27

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: Bribes Are a Sin

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Proverbs 29:4

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Amos 5:11 & 12

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Leviticus 19:11

How does this passage relate to the theme? (If the passage speaks to taking bribes, how does it also reflect on the one giving a bribe?)

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?