

## **You Can't Buy Your Way In**

Silas Gentry walked into the church building just like he'd done a thousand times before. He took off his black hat, hung it on the same hook that he'd used since 1957. He walked in, greeted no one and took his place on the end of the pew, third from the back. As worship started, Silas sat there stone faced while the rest of the congregation sang praises to the Lord. As far as I can remember, Silas never once opened his mouth to sing. As a matter of fact, I can't say that I ever remember Silas participating in any part of a worship service except when it came time for the offering. Every Sunday, without fail, Silas deposited a handful of \$100 bills into the collection plate. Once the money left his hand, his expression became hard again, one of loneliness and isolation. I understand that Silas was very influential in the congregation though you'd never know it by watching him. But I was told that he would threaten the eldership if things didn't go the way he thought they should. I've been told that at times, Silas would withhold his offering of large bills while a major decision was being made, just to remind the elders that he was responsible for a large portion of the church budget.

Silas Gentry died last year and was buried with a graveside service. Since then, the church continues to function just as well as it ever did, even without Silas' large weekly offering of \$100 bills. I guess it just goes to show you, you can't buy your way in.

Many of us believe that just because someone is financially successful means that they are excused from being involved in the work of the church. Their large contributions allow them privileges in God's Kingdom not offered to those who may not have quite as much. Nothing could be further from the truth. We learn from the story of Simon in Acts 8 that you can't buy the gift of God. "*Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!*" was Peter's answer to Simon in verse 20. God blesses us all in different ways but we are all required to use what we have (*Matthew 25:14-30*). Remember that Jesus said, "*For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*" (*Luke 12:48*). Just because someone has the ability to make large contributions doesn't mean that they are using everything God has blessed them with for the better of the church and their service to Him. What they say really is true, "You can't buy your way to heaven."

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