

2 Cor 9:6-15 More Guidelines for Generous Giving, part 1

Normally, when we spend money, we expect something positive in return. Even when we pay taxes, we expect some kind of services for the money that we hand over to the government.

What about when we are generous in giving offerings to the work of God—do we give with the expectations of a good result? Yes, we give with the expectation that our money will be used to further God’s purposes.

Generous giving for Christian ministry is significant part of the Christian life. Christ richly gave to us, and we are expected to give generously to fulfill the goals of Christian ministry. The Bible teaches grace giving—we have received graciously, and we must give graciously.

We are looking at the last part of the passage in 2 Corinthians that deals with generosity. Paul has been encouraging his readers to remember that they had agreed to give toward an offering he was collecting for the poor saints in Jerusalem. And in this last section, Paul tells us a few more things about giving.

It’s important that we...

I. Follow the biblical guidelines for generous giving.

A. .6 Give as if you were planting seeds.

1. Paul is comparing giving to planting and harvesting a crop. In the farming world, your harvest depends on how much seed you plant.

“sparingly” (φειδομένως): pertaining to what is done in a limited, sparing manner and of negligible quantity or extent,¹ meagerly, miserly

Planting just a few seeds will result in a small harvest. Meager planting results in meager harvesting. You can keep your grain and eat it, or you can plant some of it in the hopes of harvesting more. If you plant only a little seed, you’ll harvest only a few crops. *Except for zucchini.*

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 600.

He's not talking about farming here; he's talking about financial support of Christian ministry.

It's sad but true that the average giving for the average Christian is rather spare, rather limited, rather meager. Many Christians are often not generous in their giving; they give sparingly.

2. If you give bountifully, you'll reap abundantly.

You can sow seed with an open hand or with a closed hand. You can plant many seeds or just a few seeds. It all depends on what kind of harvest you want.

“bountifully” (εὐλογία) – “generously, liberally.”

The more you plant, the more likely it will be that you have a larger harvest.

Do farmers think of planting seed as a loss of that seed? Of course not. They see the potential increase in that seed. They know that one planted seed can produce many more seeds. If you want to harvest plentifully, you have to plant plentifully.

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

Quote: When a generous believer gives by faith and trust in God, with a desire to produce the greatest possible blessing, that person will receive that kind of a harvest of blessing.²

When we give to Christian ministry, we are making an investment; we are trusting that our sacrificial giving will result in a greater spiritual harvest.

And much of that harvest will be stored up for us in heaven. We may not see the results of our giving here on earth, but God promises that we will see it in heaven. God will reward us for our generosity.

² John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 2 Co 9:6.

Note: We have to be careful here, because unscrupulous preachers often exhort people to give *on the basis of greed*. They promise that generous financial giving will result in higher financial returns. “You’ll get more for yourself if you give money to me.” Thus, people give in order to get. Their goal is not the glory of God or the work of the Gospel; their goal is self-enrichment. That’s the wrong goal. The emphasis here is on using our resources for the benefit of others, not for the purpose of enriching ourselves.

B. .7 Give as you purpose in your heart—i.e., with the right motive.

Motivation is very important in virtually every area of the Christian life. We should give for the right reasons. Our highest goal should be to please God.

Quote: ... what is crucial is the attitude of the one who gives, not the amount. God, who knows and appraises our hearts, values only those gifts that come as a free expression of the deepest part of our souls.³

1. .7a Give individually—“let each one give.” Each person should give. Anyone receiving an income should also be giving something.

We can’t excuse ourselves because of our situation—too poor, I have other expenses.

2. Give purposefully.

- a) The word “purposes” (προαιρέω) means “to choose beforehand, choose for yourself; decide.” It refers to a premeditated plan, a choice from the heart.

- (1) It’s the opposite of impulsive, emotional giving. Our giving should be reasonable and thoughtful, not emotionally driven.
- (2) It’s also the opposite of compelled or pressured giving. We should give because of God’s rich grace towards us, not because others are pressuring us to give.

³ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 406.

- (3) Paul seems to be intentionally avoiding giving a command here. He's not demanding that they give; he's not forcing anything upon them. In fact, you'll notice that there is no verb here—no “give” (it's italicized). He's avoiding giving a command because he wants them to give voluntarily and cheerfully, not because he forces them to give.
- b) Our giving should be intentional—purposeful. We don't just open our wallet when we get to church to see what is in there. We think about it ahead of time and consider very carefully what would be an appropriate amount to give.
- c) And notice the amount we are supposed to give—as you purpose in your heart.

1 Corinthians 16:2 *On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up **as he may prosper**, that there be no collections when I come.*

We give in proportion to our prosperity. Those who make much should be giving much; those who make little give little. We give a percentage or proportion of our prosperity.

I don't believe that the NT absolutely requires that we give a tithe, but I do think that the tithe is a reasonable amount to give. Some of us can give more than a tithe. I've heard of very wealthy people living on 10% and giving away 90%.

It's up to you how much you give; you intentionally choose what percent of your income to give or what amount you want to give. You give as God prospers you.

Just like farmers, we all get to choose how much seed we're going to plant, either sparingly or generously. If you want to be tight-fisted and miserly, that's your choice. If you want to be open-handed and generous, that's your choice. What kind of harvest do you want?

3. .7b Do not give grudgingly (λύπη).

- a) Literally, the word means “with grief or sorrow, sadly.” I.e., reluctantly, regretfully. Those who give with this attitude experience inward sorrow over their loss of money. They regret giving. That’s an unbiblical attitude to have.

Deuteronomy 15:10 *You shall surely give to [a needy person], and **your heart should not be grieved** when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.*

- b) If you feel grief and sorrow when you give, you have an underlying problem with greed or materialism.

1 Tim 6.9-10 *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

4. .7c Do not give of necessity (ἀνάγκης)

- a) The word refers to being compelled, coerced, or shamed into giving; being pressured into it, giving under compulsion. People who feel that way about it typically sow sparingly; they are miserly and meager in their giving, if they give at all.
- b) If we feel pressured to give, it should be the pressure of our own conscience or of the Spirit of God. We should not feel compelled/forced by any other factors.
- c) Giving is a necessity; it is a NT expectation that Christians give to support the work of the ministry. He’s simply saying that we don’t do it because anyone else pressures us into it.

5. .7end Give cheerfully. “God loves a cheerful giver.”

Quote: We must not be “sad givers” who give grudgingly, or “mad givers” who give because we have to (“of necessity”); but we should be “glad givers” who cheerfully share what we have because we have experienced the grace of God.⁴

- a) The original root word for “cheerfully” is “hilarion.” This word is emphasized in the passage—“It is the cheerful giver whom God loves.”

Giving is probably not going to cause us to burst out in hilarious laughter, but it should bring us a sense of joy. There should be some degree of enthusiasm for giving because we know that our money is being used for God’s purposes. We are obeying God, worshipping God, and funding the work of God through our giving—that should bring us joy; it should be a blessing, not a source of sorrow or pain.

- b) He’s not saying, “Give as much as you can and still be happy about it.” And we should not think: “I can give this much cheerfully, but I would be sad to give more.” Instead we should say: “I am glad to give this much, and if I can give more, I would be happy to do so.”
- c) If you are mad or sad about giving, you need to make that right with the Lord. God’s grace shown toward us in Christ should make us cheerful givers. If you are not a cheerful giver, you need to ask God to help you appreciate his grace and help you to be more gracious to others. We must be cheerful, not reluctant, givers.

C. .8-9 Give as if you expected God to supply abundantly.

- 1. .8a Expect an abundance of God’s grace.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 660.

- a) “Grace” is favor, good will, gifts. In this case, it refers to financial or material resources. But it’s “all” grace, that is, all kinds of benefits or blessings. They may be financial blessings or other kinds of benefits. God may send both material and spiritual blessings our way when we give generously.
 - b) When we give some of those resources back to God, we are expressing our trust that God is able to take care of us. God is fully able to pay you back in various ways for what you give.
 - c) We don’t expect God to make us wealthy; we don’t believe in the so-called prosperity gospel. We are not giving in order to receive. Our giving should not be based on greed. But we do expect God to provide for us abundantly when we give generously.
 - d) You’ve probably heard the expression, “You can’t out give God.” Paul would agree
2. .8b Expect to have a sufficiency—“having all sufficiency.” Verses like this give us the right to expect that God will provide sufficiently for us, even when we give generously.
- a) If we give in the proper biblical way, we will still have sufficient resources to live. God replenishes our resources when we give generously.
 - b) The word “sufficiency” here implies dependence upon God to provide what one needs; contentment with what God provides; freedom from covetousness. Cf. 1 Tim 6:6 “Godliness with contentment is great gain.”
 - c) Sufficiency is not luxury. Sufficiency means having what you need. It’s contentment with what you have.
 - d) In the original language, we have the word “all” three times in a row—“all, always, all.” This emphasizes God’s abundant provision for us.
 - e) When we give according to vs. 7, we can expect God to fulfill vs. 8. You can’t claim the promise of vs. 8 until you fulfill the obligation of vs. 7.

Matthew 6:33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

f) Why are some Christians miserly and tight-fisted? Why are they sad givers? Because they doubt that they'll have enough for themselves if they give generously. Paul is urging us here not to worry about that. God will supply what we need when we give generously. The promise here is that God will supply profusely, abundantly, and graciously when we are generous.

3. .8end Expect to have an abundance for every good work.

a) If God gives us abundant resources, our responsibility is to give abundantly so that more good things can be done.

b) God expects us to use our resources for “good work.” Maybe that’s why God gave you these abundant resources—so that you can fund the work of God. The best thing we can do with abundant resources is invest it in Gospel work.

God gives us wealth so we can do good work. If we have an abundance, we should use it for God’s purposes.

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

We should use our resources for good works, not just to support a lavish lifestyle.

4. .9 Scriptural support—a quote from Ps 112:9—God is generous; he gives to the poor. If we want to be godly, we’ll do what God does.

Proverbs 19:17 *He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.*

We demonstrate our righteousness by doing good works, like giving generously to support the work of Christian ministry. We ought to be like God—dispensing and giving to those in need.

Reluctance to give purposefully, cheerfully, and expectantly reflects a lack of trust in God. Giving sadly or madly instead of giving gladly is a failure to appreciate the grace of God.

How do we give?

We give like we want to harvest a bumper crop. We plant generously so we can reap bountifully. We can't give "sparingly" if we want to harvest "bountifully."

We give as we purpose in our hearts, that is, intentionally, with the right motives. We want to be glad givers, not sad or mad givers.

We give expectantly. We trust that God will provide what we need. If God provides abundantly, we in turn give generously. God will provide sufficiently for us even if we give generously.

These are important spiritual guidelines for us to consider and adopt. I trust that all of us will seek to be cheerful givers who give abundantly, intentionally, and expectantly.

Paul has more to tell us about generous giving in the final part of this passage, but we'll end here for today.