

# HOW TO GIVE

## 2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-15

Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.

Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in

everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

We all have our likes and our dislikes.

Here's my top three likes; then my top three dislikes... ***I like*** Vanilla Coke, well manicured golf courses, and coffee with my wife... ***I dislike*** congested freeways, anonymous letters, and trips to the dentist.

I'm sure you also have your list of likes and dislikes.

As a matter of fact, even God has a list of things He loves and things He hates... *Of the things God hates...*

*Deuteronomy 16 tells us God hates idolatry.*

*Amos 5 says He hates hollow and insincere worship.*

*Malachi 2 informs us that God hates divorce.*

Actually, in Proverbs 6:16–19 God even makes out his own list of what he hates... "These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren."

On the other hand, there are *things God loves*...

In Psalm 33 He loves righteousness and justice... 1 Kings 10:9, "the Lord has loved Israel forever..." Malachi 2 not says God hates divorce, but calls marriage "the Lord's holy institution, which He loves..."

And don't forget John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." God loves the whole world - even us!

And in 2 Corinthians 9 there's one more item to add to God's list of loves... "God loves a cheerful giver."

The Greek word translated "cheerful" is "hilaros," from which we get our English word, "hilarious."

Paul is saying that God loves a *hilarious giver*.

He delights in a person who gets a kick out of giving to Him, and to people in need. "A cheerful giver" gets her jollies from giving. She considers it a thrill - a buzz.

Giving is his idea of a good time. To "a cheerful giver" it's fun to support God's work and meet other people's needs. He giggles when he drops his offering in the box, and gives back to God a little of what God has given to him. Yes, "God loves a cheerful giver."

And if you're a Christian, you should realize when it comes to God's grace, a tidal wave of blessing rolls over our soul. The psalmist says, *our cup runneth over!*

In fact, we're so swamped with God's grace, there's got to be a run-off. The blessings have to be vented.

The love is so intense, *where is the release value?*

You can't just take in God's mercy over and over, and it not elicit a response. Paul tells us it's okay to get a little giddy. Don't worry about losing your cool and spilling some emotion. God loves a hilarious giver!

And I'm certain one of the reasons God loves "*a cheerful giver*" is that He's *a cheerful giver* Himself...

No one gets more of a rush from giving, than God!

Listen to this collage of biblical quotes, "God delights in mercy... Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father... how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him... to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Every job has its list of likes and dislikes, pros and cons. In your work I'm sure there're certain aspects of your job you enjoy - other duties are a real drag.

Let me suggest the same is true with God's job.

There are aspects to being God He relishes, while there're probably other features of His job He loathes.

If I were God, venting My wrath, bringing down judgment on the rebels - showing retribution on my enemies... would be the part of my job I liked most!

*But God is just the opposite.* Even now He's putting off the day of judgment as long as He can, in hopes that as many folks as possible will come to Jesus.

God delights in showing mercy. He prefers to forgive. Judgment is the part of His job He **dislikes** the most.

What God looks forward to is giving good gifts, showing favor, bestowing on us tokens of His love, pouring our spiritual blessings on those who trust Him.

And because God is "**a cheerful giver,**" when He finds one among us, He wants to bless that person.

Now remember what's going on 2 Corinthians 8-9. Paul is taking an offering. This portion of the book is a first century fundraising letter. He's collecting relief for the church in Jerusalem- who'd fallen on hard times.

Famine had hit Judea, and many in the church were *hungry and homeless*. Paul thought it would be appropriate if the Gentile churches rallied, and offered some financial support for the church in Jerusalem.

We learned last week that the Corinthians had started to collect this special offering a year earlier. But when it comes to giving, *making a promise* is always easier than *writing a check*. The offering had stalled.

And Paul writes to them to jumpstart their giving.

Paul knew that the Corinthians' procrastination to give was an indicator of a deeper spiritual problem...

This is always the case. Nothing reveals our heart toward God quicker than our attitude toward money!

When you go to the doctor for a check-up she pushes, pokes, presses, and prods - all the while she's asking you, "Does it hurt?" "Do you feel any pain?"

The area where she pokes isn't supposed to hurt... so if you *wince* there's probably something *wrong*.

And the same is true when a pastor talks about giving. *If there's a wince - a little pain - then there's probably a problem!* A faith that hasn't reached a man's wallet hasn't reached very far into his heart. If you're *tight toward God* how can you be *tight with God*?

A person who gives hypocritically - or is stingy with his giving - or gives only out of compulsion - or doesn't give at all - doesn't really understand God's blessings.

In 2015 Americans spent \$240 billion on legalized gambling - while at the same time they gave only \$115 billion to their churches. We gambled away over twice as much money as we give to God. Today, people put more stock in *betting on chance* than *trusting in God*!

I ran across an even more sobering statistic. If all church members in America were suddenly placed on welfare - yet tithed their welfare check, gave 10% - the income of our churches would increase 35 percent!

What an indictment! Apparently, very few Christians have discovered the cheerfulness - the hilarity - the sheer joy of giving to God! It's been said, and it's so true, "It's possible to give to God without loving Him, but it's impossible to love God without giving to Him."

Now unlike most fundraising letters today, Paul writes his appeal not to pressure the Corinthians. His goal is not to squeeze them for every available dime, or to guilt trip them for not giving a specific amount.

Paul's intent is to simply teach. In Chapter 8 He says, to give. In Chapter 9 He teaches us **how to give**. And if all fundraising letters were written in the same spirit as this one from Paul, they wouldn't immediately get chunked into the round file before they're read!

Chapter 9 begins, **“Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous (or unnecessary) for me to write to you; for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.”** Realize, Paul had been a shrewd motivator.

In Chapter 8 the apostle pointed to the generosity of the Macedonians as an example to the Corinthians.

But while he was in Macedonia he used Corinth's good intentions to stir up the Macedonian church.

He found something commendable in both churches.

**“Yet I have sent the brethren...”** Remember the three brothers Paul sent to collect the offering... We talked about this last week. Paul mentioned Titus, **his soul brother - the famous brother**, and **the diligent brother**.

**“Lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.”** As we

noted last week, the Macedonians were dirt poor, yet they still managed to give to God - *and even above what they could afford.*

Now how embarrassing would it be for Paul to arrive with some rag-tag Macedonians in clothes they bought off the rack at Goodwill - excited about the offering they'd collected - only to find the wealthy Corinthians dragging their Louis Vuittons, unwilling to give a dime!

Paul writes, “Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised...” He wants to avoid an awkward and embarrassing situation. It would be a poor witness to show-up in Corinth and there be no offering.

Paul has been *talking up the church at Corinth*. Now he's concerned about them *letting him down...*

And most importantly, Paul is concerned about the attitude behind their giving... “that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.”

Paul doesn't want anybody to **give with a grudge**.  
If after all God has done for you, if you have to force yourself to write a check... *just keep it in your pocket.*

**Give because you want to, not because you have to.**

In the next three verses, 6-8, Paul's instructions on how to give to God are threefold... He has a word for us **before** we give... He has directions for us **as** we give... and he supplies insight for us **after** we give...



## Before we give... As we give... After we give...

Let's take them one at a time, starting in verse 6...

Here's a principle Paul wants us to consider **before we give...** "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." In our text this morning Paul is going to say a lot to free us up from the pressures and stresses normally associated with financial giving...

If you're *giving reluctantly*, then don't give!

If you're *giving under duress*, then don't give!

If the preacher is *making you feel guilty and applying the financial squeeze*, then you don't have to give!

If you're giving begrudgingly because you feel you *have to* rather than you *want to*, then don't give!

Paul is even going to tell us *not to let someone else tell you how much you should give!* The amount of your giving is a matter that's strictly between you and God.

Paul's intent in this passage is to free us up from all the expectations and legalizations and regulations so *we can give for the sheer, unadulterated joy of giving!*

And at this point you could be plotting... "Great, how much can I give and still be cheerful? I'll play it safe. I'll give five dollars." And maybe that \$5 is all you should give, but there's one more to factor in the equation...

Paul shares an important principle here in verse 6, "*He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*"

***Before you give*** know that your gift to God is not just a gift, it's **an investment**... Realize, theoretically speaking, it's impossible for us to give anything to God.

If you're a Christian everything you have belongs to God in the first place. When you give to God you're just giving back to Him what He's already given to you.

Jump down to verse 10 and notice how Paul refers to our offering, **"Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness"** Paul refers to our money as seed.

The money you give to God is seed that you sow.

Place a donation in the offering box and you're not giving anything away - or losing anything - you're investing in the Kingdom of God. It's a payment that will one day return to you a rich dividend. The seed you sow in God's work will produce a bountiful harvest.

Here Paul applies a agricultural principle to our spiritual giving. The farmer knows if he sows a little he'll reap a little, but if he sows a lot he'll reap a lot.

And the same is true with a person's giving to God.

*Before you give* you need to realize... *give a little, get a little - give a lot, get a lot!* It's a simple principle.

You reap in proportion to what you sow! **The degree to which you give is the degree to which you'll get.**

I'll never forget one of our new member orientations.

A guy walked into the room with a grim look on his face. He was clutching his Bible. You could tell he was geared up for a red-hot argument. In fact, dozens of little pieces of paper hung from the ends of its pages.

He'd marked his Bible with plenty of ammunition.

After my opening remarks, I opened up the floor for questions. This guy's hand immediately shot up. Like a rattlesnake he was coiled to strike! Through clenched teeth he asked me, *"I want to know what you believe... should we tithe our gross-income or our net-income?"*

I got tickled. I chuckled, "I don't care what you give. That's between you and God. Just do it cheerfully."

Then I added, "How much you give depends on how much you want to be blessed. Do you want to be blessed nettly or grossly! It's a law - like any other natural law - you reap in proportion to what you sow!

A well known Christian philanthropist was once asked, *"How is it that you give away so much, and yet have so much left?"* The man replied, "I shovel out, and God shovels in, and God has the bigger shovel!"

I like John Bunyan's jingle, "A man there was, and they called him mad; the more he gave, the more he had." You can't out-give God! He's got a bigger shovel!

Proverbs 11:24 puts it this way, *"There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty."* In essence, hoard you money and you'll lose it - but give it to God - invest it in His kingdom - and watch it grow!

I heard of a pastor who had his congregation all stand. He told each person to reach out and take the wallet of the person in front of them. The pastor then said to his flock, "Now open up your neighbor's wallet and give like you've always wanted to give, but never felt you could afford."... So *why don't we all stand...*

But you will reap in proportion to what you sow - and the keyword is "*proportion.*" God looks not at the *portion of the gift*, its amount - but the *proportion*, what is leftover after you give. A wealthy man with billions of dollars, can give \$10 million, yet still give sparingly.

It reminds me of the tycoon whose son always heard him pray for the needs of the missionaries overseas. One day, he said to his father, "You know dad, if you'll give me your checkbook I can answer your prayers."

A rich man can give a \$1 million and give sparingly, while a poor man can give \$20 and give bountifully.

Remember the widow in the Temple? She gave two mites - that was less than a penny - but they were *mighty mites* for they represented all that she had!

In Luke 21:3 Jesus points to her example. "This poor widow has put in more than all, for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty has put in all the livelihood that she had."

The woman didn't give much, but she gave her all.

**Before you give**, remember you reap in proportion to what you sow - give generously, and regularly, and unselfishly to the Lord and you'll reap an abundance.

But Paul also speaks of a few issues we need to be aware of **as we give**. Verse 7 instructs us, "**So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.**"

First, Paul tells us not to give "**grudgingly or of necessity.**" If your heart is *adverse* to giving, then don't give - or if you feel *coerced* into giving, then don't give. When you give always give cheerfully.

A church bulletin once printed the statement, "**God loveth a cheerful giver, but He accepteth from a grouch.**" That might be funny, but it's not really true!

We instruct our Sunday counters if they spot a check where the handwriting looks forced... where someone scribbled too hard... or drug their pen across the paper... If they wrote it begrudgingly, just give it back!

When my son, Mack, was 5 years-old his granddad gave him a dollar. Mack made a wonderful decision, especially for a 5 year old, he chose to give it to Jesus.

He went to that offering box, stuck it in the slot, then he stalled... A whole dollar represents big bucks to a young man who's just five. He asked me, "**Dad, will I go to the devil if I don't give this dollar?**" I assured him, "**Mack, Jesus still loves you even when you don't give.**"

So he stuck the dollar back in his pocket and ran off.

He'd yet to learn the joy of giving to God! Now at 25, he tells me he's learned. But some folks never do...

Once a man confessed, "My pastor says we need to give until it hurts. For me it hurts just to think about giving!" If that's how you feel then it's best you not give at all. *You're still going to heaven. You're still forgiven.*

But if you can't give to Jesus out of a thankful, joyful heart - just keep your money. It won't help you or God!

I think this principle of joyous giving is true not just in our finances, but with any gift we offer God - *our time, our talents, our service*. If you wake up on a Sunday morning moaning and groaning that you've got to go down to that church and teach those snotty-nosed little kids again this week - then you shouldn't be teaching.

If you can't do it cheerfully; then don't do it at all.

The same goes for leading worship, or ushering, or working in the Brook - or even delivering a sermon - if you can't give it to God cheerfully, then don't give.

As my man, BB King, use to sing... (clip) If that's happened in your giving to God - *if the thrill is gone, baby* - then *slow it down... and take some time... and rediscover God's amazing grace*. Mull over His mercy for a while until your heart is flush again with thanksgiving and praise... *God loves a hilarious giver!*

In verse 7 Paul says we're not to give "**grudgingly or of necessity.**" That means we're not to give to God under pressure or duress. And this is where a lot of pastors need to repent in sackcloth and ashes.

I've heard of pastors who passed the plate twice, because they didn't get what they wanted the first time.

That's inexcusable! That's pastoral malpractice!

I remember years ago, a big time evangelist said God told him He would take him home if he didn't raise his financial goal. God was kidnapping him, and holding him for ransom. My attitude was "If that's what he's saying God needs to take him home! He's misrepresenting God, and he's manipulating people..."

I get weary of Pastors who sing a sad song for God.

"Oh, if you don't give to God His work is going under. God is going to go belly-up! God needs your help!"

They give the impression an all-wise God doesn't know how to manage His money. He's always teetering on the verge of bankruptcy - needing us to bail him out.

Mark Twain once went to church and was planning to give an offering - but after sitting through a high pressure appeal for funds, he was so disgusted with what he heard, when the plate was passed... rather than give his offering, he kept it, and actually helped himself to a few dollars - *took it right out of the plate!*

According to a friend of mine there is a church in Alabama that bills their members for unpaid tithes...

*That's so shameful, it makes my blood boil!*

Let me set the record straight! God doesn't need your money! His resources are unlimited. God is fully capable of supporting His work! And if you don't give, God will raise up others who'll give and give cheerfully.

Yet at the same time, He loves you. God wants you to experience the joy of giving and participating in His Kingdom. He's even willing to bless you as you give!

I like something else Paul says in verse 7... as we give, each of us should **"give as he purposes in his heart."** In other words, the details of our giving should be worked out in our heart with God beforehand.

*The amount of the gift - the frequency of the gift - the method you give - the direction of the gift - are all issues over which God will deal with you individually.*

Unlike OT times, today, there's no longer a law that governs our giving. It's a personal decision. Do you want to be blessed a lot or a little? Giving is a choice.

People ask, if that's true, **"Then, what about the tithe? Should we tithe?"** The word **"tithe"** means **"tenth,"** and since Abraham's day the tenth is the percentage God's has use to guide the giving of His people.

The tithe works like a flat tax - it's 10% across the board - no special deductions, no write-offs. Its one size fits all. It's an equitable, fair, impartial way to give.

And let me say, I think the Holy Spirit is partial to the tithe. God has led me personally, and countless other Christians throughout the ages, to tithe regularly.

There once was a fellow at CC who'd just gotten saved. He knew nothing of the Bible and the Christian life, but he loved Jesus and was eager to serve.



He came to me one day, and said, "Pastor Sandy, I believe the Lord wants me to start tithing - I'm not sure what it is, but I want to do it." I thought, "Tithing? What's tithing?" Then it dawned on me he was talking about tithing! He didn't even know what it was, but the Spirit had put it on his heart that he needed to obey.

**Am I saying you need to tithe?** *Well, maybe.*

It's not for *me* to tell *you* how to give. That's between you and God... *What if I told you to give 10% and God said 20%, I'd sale you short.* But I know God wants us to give regularly and sacrificially, so if He doesn't direct you otherwise, *why not tithe?* It's a trustworthy guide.

And again, "give as you purpose in your heart." The implication is that all our financial giving should be preceded by purpose. Don't give haphazard. Our giving to God is too vital to be left to random impulses - or whatever strikes you. It needs to be thought-out!

Whether it's 5%, or 10%, OR 15% - whatever and however you give should be committed to in advance.

Every day, twice a day, at predetermined intervals, I brush my teeth. My personal hygiene isn't determined by whim and impulse. I have a schedule for brushing, and because of it, if you inspected me on a regular basis rarely would you find food between my teeth.

But don't look at my office - most of the time it's cluttered and filthy - *and there's a reason why...*

I don't have a regular time set aside to clean my office like I do my teeth. I do it on a whim, or when I've extra time - which usually amounts to once a year.

This is why a tithe is so helpful - it's *a regular amount at a regular interval*. Paul's point is, some tasks don't get done unless you're committed to doing them regularly... Giving to God is one of those tasks!

Finally, Paul explains what we can expect **after we give**. Verse 8 promises, **"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work."** God always sees to it, that generally speaking a cheerful giver has plenty to give...

In Psalm 37:25 an elderly King David offers some reflection on his long life, **"I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread."** And I second David's observations! In my 58 years I've never seen anyone who to God regularly, end up in the poorhouse - never!

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."**

In the OT, giving to God revolved around the concept of **the first fruits**. Sacrifice an animal and it needed to be the first and best of the flock - the pick of the litter...

If you gave produce it was from the initial sweep of the harvest. God was honored with the first of the flock or crop. Thanks to God came before your own needs.

At Thanksgiving the Butterball Turkey Company sets up a talk-line to answer consumer questions about preparing holiday turkeys. Once, a woman called to ask about cooking a turkey that had been in the bottom of her freezer for 23 years. *That's right, 23 years.*

The Butterball representative told her the turkey would be safe to eat if the freezer had been below zero for the entire 23 years. The Butterball rep warned her though, that even if the turkey was safe to eat, its flavor would probably have deteriorated to such a degree that she wouldn't recommend eating the meat.

The caller replied, "That's what I thought. We'll give the turkey to our church." Don't give God your scrapes, your leftovers, your rejects - give God your best.

This is why any offering should always be our first fruits. When I pay my bills the first check I write is to God. It's my way of saying all I have belongs to Him.

The way I give to God is an expression of my faith in Him. When I give Him the first fruits I'm saying that the rest of my income belongs to Him as well. *When I give God my 10%...* in essence I'm saying, "God, I believe you can do more with 90% than I can do with 100%."

And that's the safest bet you'll ever make!

And notice, if you trust God in the area of you money, His blessing will flow into all areas. Four times in verse 8 Paul uses the phrase "all." He says, "**always having all sufficiency in all things.**" Honor God in your finances and God will bless you in *all* areas of your life!

Perhaps He'll restore a friendship, or heal a hurt, or create some joy, or relieve a burden. God has lots of ways to give back to His kids when they give to Him!

In verse 9 Paul continues, "**As it is written** (in Psalm 112:9): "**He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.**" Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many **thanksgivings to God**" The offering collected for the church in Jerusalem will not only meet their physical needs, it'll bless them spiritually. The Jews in Judea will be grateful *to God*.

And this should be the motivation behind all our giving - to not only meet needs, but to bring God glory.

Verse 13, "**while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.**"

Corinth's gift to the Jerusalem church was an answer to the

prayers the Jews had prayed for the Corinthians.

The Jews prayed for the Gentiles love and spiritual growth. Now this offering is the answer to their prayers.

Paul concludes Chapter 9, “Thanks be to God for His **indescribable gift!** How fitting that Paul wraps up his discussion on giving by reminding the Corinthians of the greatest gift... God's “*indescribable gift*” - Jesus!

All our gifts pale in comparison to God’s gift to us.

Please know my motive behind today’s message...

The elders didn’t run me out here to hammer away at giving, so we could pay a few bills. There’s no crisis.

Besides just teaching through the book, here’s my motive this AM, I’m hoping here at CC God assembles a whole church full of ***hilarious givers!*** So that every offering - every act of service - is done cheerfully.

And if that happens, *what a place to go to church!*

God loves “***a cheerful giver.***” *Are you one?*