

How we give * 2 Corinthians 8-9

May 19, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

It's said that Winston Churchill once spoke these wise words: We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

I think that that's a very important insight, because it pushes us to think not just about how we use money for our own benefit but how we can use our money for the benefit of others.

Certainly that's an idea that the apostle Paul could get behind and having given us the motivation for giving in 2 Corinthians 8:9, Paul now goes on to give us principles for giving. In light of the fact that Jesus, who was spiritually rich became poor so that we who were spiritually bankrupt could become rich – in light of that fact, Paul says 'we as Jesus' followers ought to give intentionally, proportionally, generously, and confidently.' In light of God's grace we give intentionally, proportionally, generously, and confidently. Let's look at 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 through that lens.

So first, we give *intentionally*. How many of you I wonder have a specific plan for giving. Like, you've sat down and looked at your income and said "I have this much money; I'm going to give ten percent as a tithe" or some other number and then divided up the weeks and given accordingly. Do you have a plan for giving or is it haphazard?

In 1 Corinthians, when Paul first floated the idea of collecting funds for famine relief, he said – on the first day of every week, set aside some money and then it will be all ready to go when we get there to pick it up. That's intentional giving. That's deciding that you will intentionally use your money as a way to honour God for the free gift of grace that He has given you. They set aside a portion of their money and said 'no if's and's and but's about it, this money is for God.'

2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made (1 Cor 16:2).

And Paul tells us that as believers, we should all do that. 2 Corinthians 9:7, Paul writes - 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2Co 9:7 NIV). Each one should give what he has decided to give in his heart.

We give intentionally.

Now that raises the question – how much do we give? I think that ten percent is a good place to start, not out of obligation, but as a spiritual discipline, but Paul doesn't even say that here. All he says is that we should give *proportionally*.

In 1 Corinthians, he said 'set aside some money in keeping with your income' (16:2), and then again here in 2 Corinthians 8:12 he says - ~~12 For if the willingness is there,~~ the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. (2Co 8:12 NIV).

The point here is that we give according to what we have. We don't compare our giving to others; we look at our financial situation and give accordingly. We don't have to give the biggest gift in the world; we just have to give out of a place of gratitude in line with our income.

And notice here, the very next line, Paul says - 13 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. Paul is calling us to give according to our means, not that we go bankrupt while they live high, but that everyone would have enough.

And I'll tell you – this has really made me stop and consider – I have more than enough, while some people in the world just don't. How can I give proportionally to help to even out that balance a little?

Part of the answer I think is to give *generously*. Paul says in 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously (2Co 9:6 NIV). Knowing how generously God gives to us, we need to give generously to honour Him for that gift. To borrow from the 23rd psalm – our cup runneth over – we need to let those blessings overflow to others.ⁱ We give generously.

We give generously and finally we give *confidently*. I suspect that David Garland is right when he writes – “Most people become miserly in their giving [when] they worry that they will not have enough” (407). But Paul reminds us here – we will ALWAYS have enough. Again, 23rd psalm – ‘the Lord is my shepherd; I shall want for nothing.’

Paul specifically says here – (9:8) - 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work... And then verse 11 - 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2Co 9:8-11 NIV).

We can give intentionally and proportionally and generously - CONFIDENTLY - knowing that God will provide for us so that we can give to others. ‘You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous in situation.’ That’s a pretty amazing promise.

It actually reminds me of a song I learned back in Sunday school - “Love is like a magic penny/hold it tight and you won't have any/lend it, spend it, you'll have so many/they'll roll all over the floor/...Love is something if you give it away/... you end up having more.”

As it turns out, love is not the only thing like a magic penny. Money is like a magic penny too. When we give, God refills our coffers so that we can give again. And that gives us the confidence to put our resources at God's disposal and trust that we will always have enough.

In light of the free gift of God, we give intentionally, proportionally, generously and confidently. Those are Paul's principles for giving; join me next time and we'll talk about the outcomes of giving in 2 Corinthians 9:11 and on.

ⁱ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/most-common-reason-why-we_b_4063615