

What happens when we give * 2 Corinthians 9:11-15

May 21, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

Today I want to look with you at something that I think of as the giving triangle (page 3).

In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, Paul talks about *why* we give – Jesus became poor to make us rich – and he talks about *how* we give – intentionally, proportionately, generously and confidently – and then he rounds things off by talking about what *happens* when we give. What happens when we, motivated by the grace of God, share the gifts of God with others? Well, I really think we can answer that by way of this triangle – the giving triangle.

God gives us material blessings so that we will give to those in need who will then give thanks to God for all that He gives. God gives us material blessings, when we give them away, the needs of others are met, and they give thanks to God for His gifts. The giving triangle.

Let me show you how that flows out of Paul's letter. 2 Corinthians 9, starting in verse 11.

Paul says - 11 You will be made rich in every way... - God giving material blessings to His people. That's the first side of the triangle isn't it? God gives financial gifts to His people. And we've by and large been the recipients of those blessings, haven't we? We may not be the richest people in the world, but if you have an annual income of \$40,000, that puts you in the top 17% of earners around the world.ⁱ You have more than 80% of the rest of the world. God has given us material blessings.

But God has not given us material blessings to keep for ourselves. He intends that we would have enough and that we would share His blessings with His people. So let's read 9 verse 11 again – You will be made rich in every way - so that you can be generous on every occasion –

God's gifts are not meant to make us richer; God's gifts are given to make the world better. And so God intends that we give to help people who are in need. That's the bottom of the triangle.

But, the triangle has one more side, doesn't it? When people receive the gifts of God through us, they praise God for His gifts. Verse 11 concludes - and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. I'm always amazed when I get letters from my Compassion child – they almost all start with those very words – dearest sponsor Graham, I give thanks to God for you and for your gifts.

God gives so that we give so that they give.

And Paul continues in verse 12 - 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

Again, we give to help those in need – their needs are met – and that's really important. I had a note from the Blessings Centre – a report on the difference they're making in the community – and they shared with us that people were saying 'because of these gifts, they have food in their cupboards for the first time ever and they still have money left at the middle of the months. Our giving supplies their needs AND they give thanks in return. But not only that, when we give, we too are giving thanks for God's gifts. Paul writes in verse 13 -

13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

We're not just sharing with others because it's the nice thing to do – we are giving as a grateful, obedient response to the undeserved grace of God – 'the obedience that flows from your confession of the gospel of Christ.' When we give out of gratitude to God, our giving actually becomes 'thanksgiving' – we give as an act of thanks for the goodness that God has shown to us.

And then in verse 14 - 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Again, I've seen this in my letters from my Compassion child – sponsor Graham I pray for you and your family – and then verse 15 - 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (2Co 9:11-15 NIV).

Thanks indeed! God gives material blessings so that we will give to others so that they will give God thanks for his indescribable gifts. The giving triangle.

Ok, now what do we do with that? Many of us are on the upper right hand side of the triangle. Well, I think that the obvious question is what are you doing with God's material blessings? Are you stopping them up like a reservoir for your own wellbeing? Or are you channeling them out proportionately to people in need? The triangle only works if we take the Gospel seriously and give generously in light of it and I think David Garland is right when he says:

God is generous in giving people wealth so that they may be generous with others. What we do with our money, then, becomes a litmus test for our relationship with God. If we try to hoard it or to spend it all on ourselves, that should set off alarm bells that our relationship with God is out of balance or worse, nonexistent... Those who are decisive and resourceful in trying to find ways to use God's bounty to help others... are those who are righteous in God's eyes..." (Garland, NAC, 412).

God gives so that we give so that others will give. I want to encourage you to think about how you use your money for God's Kingdom. I want to encourage you to ask 'does my giving reflect my gratitude for the lavish gifts of God?'

And I want to encourage you by saying – we are a generous congregation. At this point in the pandemic, a lot of churches will be struggling financially, but we're not doing too bad. Thank you for that. Thank you for sending in cheques faithfully. And because of your faith giving, we've felt confident to keep giving faithfully to Blessings Centre and Friendship House and Compassion Canada and Teen Challenge and the Gleaners and the Pregnancy resource centre and the food bank and why not. Their needs are being met, they're giving thanks and God is glorified as He should be. Keep it up. God gives so that we give so that others give.

The Giving Triangle

