

## Unit 2: Dealing with Problems in the Church (1 and 2 Corinthians)

### Lesson 12 | February 16, 2025

#### Instructions on Giving

##### Study Text

Acts 11:27–30; 1 Corinthians 16:1–4; 2 Corinthians 8:1 through 9:15

##### Central Truth

Cheerful generosity is the Christian way of life.

##### Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 9:7

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver (KJV).

You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully" (NLT).

##### Learning Objectives

- Students will embrace a biblical perspective on money and possessions.
- Students will examine their motives for giving.
- Students will develop a budget that allows them to give generously.

##### Introducing the Lesson

**Say:** The lessons in this series have been especially challenging, dealing with a variety of problems in the church. We've discussed unity, sexual immorality, and idolatry. And today's topic is no easier: We're talking about money. (Take a deep breath. We're not taking a special offering at the end of class . . . Probably.)

##### Discussion Starter—Familiar Sayings

**Say:** What are some familiar or popular sayings about money? (*Examples: "A fool and his money are soon parted." "A penny saved is a penny earned."*) What are common themes found in these sayings? How do these themes line up with what you know the Bible says about money?

**Say:** Scripture describes cheerful generosity as being part of the Christian way of life. We give because God gives. We give cheerfully and generously because that is the way God gives.

Paul's instructions about giving in 1 and 2 Corinthians provide principles for giving graciously and cheerfully. When Paul wrote these letters, a collection was being received for Jewish believers in Judea. The churches Paul had founded among the Gentiles heard about the need and eagerly desired to help. Paul wanted to make sure these churches' gifts brought glory to God, so he taught them how to give graciously, proportionately, and cheerfully. (***Play the Lesson 12 video about practical***

***stewardship and generosity. You can download it for free at [radiantlifecurriculum.com/resources](http://radiantlifecurriculum.com/resources).)***

## **Part 1—Give Graciously and with Integrity**

### **Give Graciously**

2 Corinthians 8:1–7

**Say:** Generosity is a trait that reflects God’s giving nature. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father” (James 1:17, NIV), so it makes sense that His children would also give to those in need. The believers in Macedonia and Greece were aware of the financial challenges their fellow believers were facing. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul had given them instructions about collecting their gift (1 Corinthians 16:1–4). In his second letter, Paul updated the church on the collection.

Paul was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles—a fact that was acknowledged by other Christian leaders, including Peter, James, and John (Galatians 2:9). They encouraged him to continue helping those in need, which he was eager to do (verse 10). One of the first examples of Paul carrying out this directive is found in Acts 11:27–30. The church in Antioch of Syria sent a gift to believers in the region of Judea during a famine, and Paul was part of the delegation who delivered the offering to the Judean hub—Jerusalem.

Many years later, churches Paul had founded during his missionary journeys again wanted to assist their struggling brothers and sisters. Following Titus’s example, the believers in Corinth had eagerly given toward this cause (2 Corinthians 8:6), along with the other churches throughout Macedonia (verses 1–2). Despite their own pressing circumstances, they gave out of their joy and gratitude for all God had done for them. They didn’t have much, but they were more than happy to share what they did have. They had given sacrificially.

The believers in Macedonia understood the purpose of giving and responded to God’s grace by surrendering to Him. They supported the gospel work of Paul and his company, recognizing God was the source for every blessing they received. They gave not because they had to, but because they wanted to.

Believers can be motivated to give for a variety of reasons: a sense of obligation, a desire for recognition, or an attempt to assuage guilt. But the best motive for giving is graciousness. This kind of giving happens when we recognize all we have received from God. Being able to share those blessings with others brings great joy. When times are tough and our giving is sacrificial, we are making a declaration of faith: God supplies all my needs, so I can share His gifts with others.

### **Discuss**

- ? How can other people’s examples of generosity encourage us to give?
- ? Does giving need to be sacrificial to be gracious? Explain.

## **Give Willingly**

2 Corinthians 9:1–5

**Say:** Has a child ever tried to talk you into adopting a pet? Kids often promise to take care of new pets all by themselves, but before long the adults are usually the ones feeding and walking the dog or cleaning out the cat’s litter box. It can end up being a frustrating situation. Paul did not want the collection for the Judean believers to become frustrating for the Corinthians or himself.

As Paul continued to discuss the collection to help other believers, he pointed out that the Corinthians’ offering was more than a simple act of charity. In fact, it was ministry through giving (2 Corinthians 9:1). These funds would do more than supply for physical needs; they would encourage the recipients and bring glory to God.

The believers in Corinth had been eager to give when the collection plan was announced a year earlier (verse 2). Paul had shared their enthusiasm for the project with the other churches in Macedonia, where he had gone to proclaim the gospel. The Corinthians’ example had spurred the Macedonian believers to give graciously and sacrificially even as they faced troubles themselves.

But Paul understood human nature. Good intentions and initial enthusiasm are not always enough to get a project completed over the long haul. It takes integrity to follow through on a commitment like this. Otherwise, the results can be frustrating or embarrassing. To avoid this kind of outcome, Paul sent Titus and a couple of other brothers to assist the Corinthian church as they completed their collection (verses 3–4). They would oversee all the funds, making sure they were handled in a way that prevented any criticism (8:16–24).

Paul wanted the Corinthians to experience the joy of giving willingly, not out of compulsion (9:5). Knowing that God was working through them could draw them closer as a body of believers and strengthen their faith to minister God’s grace in other ways.

Our handling of money can reveal our spiritual maturity. If we give grudgingly, it may indicate we do not fully trust God as provider or fully reflect His giving nature. But when we give willingly, we display God’s gracious and caring nature. God owns everything, and we are merely managers or stewards of what He has given us.

### **Resource Packet Item 1: Giving—A Reflection of God’s Nature**

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father” (James 1:17, NIV). Students will reflect on Scriptures about God’s generous nature and then consider how this characteristic is reflected in their own lives.

#### Discuss

- ? How would you describe the difference between giving willingly or grudgingly?
- ? Make a list of people or groups your class could generously bless.

## **Part 2—Give Proportionately**

### **Give Regularly**

1 Corinthians 16:1–4

**Say:** In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul answered many of their questions, including one about a collection sent to Jerusalem to help struggling believers (1 Corinthians 16:1). Paul encouraged the believers in Corinth to follow the same procedure as the churches in Galatia. Over time, they would develop the discipline of regular, faithful giving.

The churches in Galatia, Macedonia, and Greece had taken on the project of collecting an offering for struggling believers that would be taken to Jerusalem. Evidently, the believers asked Paul for guidance on the matter, which he provided in 1 Corinthians 16:1–4. The believers were to give faithfully and regularly toward the contribution. Paul did not specify the amount, but instead told the believers to set aside a portion of their earnings each week as they were able.

God does not measure giving like we do. Too often, we put greater value on larger gifts, but God values the motivation of a person's giving more than the amount they give (Mark 12:41–44). Developing the discipline of regular giving (or setting money aside for a specific gift) makes it easier to give graciously and cheerfully.

Regular giving is the best practice for most people, especially those who struggle with self-discipline. It allows people to follow through on their good intentions, rather than being derailed by unexpected expenses. It also ensures the gift does not create financial hardship, making it much easier to give cheerfully. By regularly setting aside funds, the Corinthian believers would not have to scrape together last-minute funds or feel like they were depriving themselves of basic needs. Their gift would not be burdensome, but joyous.

Paul and the other church leaders organizing and collecting the offering were careful to handle the funds with integrity and accountability. One safeguard they put in place was allowing churches to select their own members to deliver the collection to Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:3). Paul would write letters attesting to the messengers' reliability and trustworthiness, even offering to travel with them if necessary (verse 4).

#### Discuss

? What tips would you give someone who wants to grow in the discipline of regular giving?

? Why is financial integrity so important in the church?

### **Give from What You Have**

2 Corinthians 8:8–15

**Say:** There's an old saying that goes, "Put your money where your mouth is." In other words, if you say you believe in something, your giving should reflect that. This is the essence of Paul's message to the Corinthian believers in 2 Corinthians 8:8–15.

Paul showed some concern that the Corinthians' initial enthusiasm for this collection may have waned over the last year. So he challenged them to "excel also in this gracious act of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7). They had been the first to commit to give, and their eagerness had spurred other churches to give generously, even sacrificially. Now they could prove that their eagerness was more than just good intentions.

Paul's appeal to the Corinthian believers was based on their own initial eagerness, the other churches' responses, and their potential to excel in giving. Paul added one more component: the example of Jesus (verse 9). Although He had enjoyed the riches of heaven, He made himself poor for their sake—and ours (Ephesians 1:3–8).

The Corinthians were to give in proportion to what they had (2 Corinthians 8:10–13). Many of them had more than enough, but even those who were struggling could still give a small amount. "Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly" (verse 12). Paul wanted them to understand that in God's economy, equality is expected (verses 13–15). God's people have experienced His love, which means they care about each other and share of their abundance with others in need (1 John 3:16–18).

In 2 Corinthians 8:15, Paul drew on the Old Testament account of God providing manna for the Israelites (Exodus 16). Following God's instructions, the people gathered manna according to the size of their households, and everyone had what they needed.

### **Resource Packet Item 2: Planning to Give**

Paul taught the Corinthian believers to "give in proportion to what you have" (2 Corinthians 8:11). Students will consider the differences between needs and wants, complete a financial self-evaluation, and prayerfully consider whether their giving reflects God's generous nature.

We can trust God to supply our needs. In fact, He often supplies more than we need so we can bless others. Believers who excel in giving have learned the truth of Jesus' words: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

#### Discuss

? Describe a time when another believer blessed you with something you needed.

? What steps can you take to become more generous?

### **Part 3—Give Cheerfully**

#### **God Generously Provides**

2 Corinthians 9:6–10

**Say:** God rewards generous giving. Paul encouraged the Corinthian believers to carefully consider the amount they should give. Whatever amount they chose, they

should give cheerfully with no sense of reluctance or pressure. People who have been transformed by God's grace and love will be marked by love and generosity.

Paul emphasized the rewards of generous giving by sharing a principle about sowing and reaping (2 Corinthians 9:6). If a farmer plants only a little seed, the harvest will be small. But if he or she plants lots of seed, the harvest will be bountiful. This naturally leads to the conclusion that the farmer is free to sow either "sparingly" or "bountifully" (KJV). Likewise, the Corinthian believers were free to decide in their own hearts what they would give toward the collection for Jerusalem believers (verse 7). The decision should be made freely—not under duress.

Paul's quote about God loving a cheerful giver comes from Proverbs 22:8 in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament completed before Jesus' birth). God's blessings flow to those who give cheerfully. He supplies all they need—plus extra to share.

Verse 9 includes a quote from Psalm 112:9, part of a psalm that speaks of the benefits derived from fearing God and delighting in His commands. Righteous people who trust God for their needs will show generosity and care for the poor. Just as God provides seed for the sower, He also provides resources for those who are willing to give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:10). Their giving produces a great harvest of good deeds.

God blesses those who develop the habit of cheerful, generous giving. Often those blessings are not material but instead come in the form of spiritual maturity, the pleasure of helping others, and the joy of advancing the kingdom of God.

### **Resource Packet Item 3: A Family in Need**

Students will read and discuss a case study about contributing to a special offering.

Could Paul have been thinking of the Sermon on the Mount as he penned this portion of his letter to the Corinthians? Jesus had said not to worry about life's necessities because our Heavenly Father knows what we need. Instead, believers should seek God's kingdom, trusting the Father to provide for us (Matthew 6:25–33). We do not give generously just so we can receive extra blessings from God, but we can be confident that our generosity will never exceed His (Luke 6:38).

#### Discuss

? Would you describe yourself as a cheerful giver? Why or why not?

? How could you cultivate generosity in your life?

### **God Is Glorified**

2 Corinthians 9:11–15

**Say:** When it comes to giving, believers should remember to look beyond the gift and focus on what God can do with it. How will your summer camp scholarship open the door for God to work in a teenager's life? How will your donation to the building fund



allow your church to grow in its discipleship reach? How will your missionary offering lead to new people hearing the good news of Jesus? When we give generously and cheerfully, needs are met and God is glorified.

Paul summarized his previous comments by affirming that God blesses believers so they can bless others (2 Corinthians 9:11). Because of the generosity of the Corinthian believers, “the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God” (verse 12). The believers would, of course, be grateful for the aid they received. But beyond that, this gift would confirm the Gentiles had received the gospel (verse 13), and the Jewish believers would pray for the Gentile believers with deeper affection (verse 14).

Paul concluded his discussion of this topic with a short doxology. He thanked God “for his unspeakable gift” (verse 15, KJV). What was this gift “too wonderful for words” (NLT)? It was God’s grace, perfectly demonstrated through the sacrifice of Jesus. We were perishing in sin; now we have everlasting life (John 3:16). We were in the kingdom of darkness; now we are in Christ’s kingdom (Colossians 1:13). John Newton captured concisely the essence of God’s indescribable gift: “Amazing grace (how sweet the sound) that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.”<sup>1</sup>

### Discuss

? Why is cheerful giving one of the marks that a person’s life has been changed by the power of the gospel?

? How can generosity draw a giver closer to God?

### **What Is God Saying to Us?**

**Say:** Our cheerful generosity reflects the gracious nature of God. It also shows that we trust God as our Source. We may sometimes feel overwhelmed by the needs around us—from the local church, outreach organizations, and individuals who cross our paths. But the principles Paul taught the Corinthian church can help us know how and when to give. God blesses us with resources so we can develop the spiritual discipline of giving and generously bless others as He directs us. Through our obedient giving, His kingdom advances.

### **Living It Out**

Ministry in Action

- Intentionally budget and set aside money so you can give as needs arise.
- Prayerfully examine your motive for giving. If you are not giving cheerfully, ask the Lord to work in your heart.
- Discuss ways you can practice generosity as a class. For example, maybe you could support a missionary or create a youth camp scholarship together.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Generous Giving for Tabernacle

Construction. Exodus 36:1–7

Tuesday:

Generous Giving for Temple Construction.

1 Chronicles 29:1–9

Wednesday:

Nehemiah's Generosity.

Nehemiah 5:14–19

Thursday:

Generosity Commended.

Luke 21:1–4

Friday:

Generously Giving of Oneself.

Acts 20:17–35

Saturday:

Generosity Will Be Rewarded.

1 Timothy 6:17–19

1. John Newton, "Amazing Grace," 1779, accessed May 30, 2023, [https://hymnary.org/text/amazing\\_grace\\_how\\_sweet\\_the\\_sound](https://hymnary.org/text/amazing_grace_how_sweet_the_sound).