

HOW CHURCH WORKS

"HOW TO SOW" 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Money – I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes 2 Corinthians 8:7 *But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

Much of what Paul writes about giving he writes with regard to a special offering he was collecting for poor saints in Jerusalem. Interestingly, what he writes echoes a saying of Jesus that Paul, alone, has preserved for us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Ac 20:35). Why these Jewish believers were perpetually poor isn't exactly known, but several factors may have been at play. One author writes: "(1) After their conversion to Christianity many Jews in Jerusalem would have been ostracized socially and economically. (2) The 'experiment in community sharing' described in Acts 2:44, 45 and 4:32, 34, 35 undoubtedly would have aggravated, though it did not cause, their poverty. (3) Persistent food shortages in Palestine because of overpopulation culminated in the famine of A.D. 46 in the time of Emperor Claudius (Acts 11:27-30). (4) As the mother-church of Christendom, the Jerusalem church was obligated to support a proportionately large number of teachers and probably to provide hospitality for frequent Christian visitors to the holy city. (5) Jews in Palestine were subject to a crippling twofold

"We thank God for what we have received; others thank God for what they have received from us."

– David E. Garland

taxation—Jewish and Roman" (Murray J. Harris, "2 Corinthians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:311).

Not only can we learn about giving from the instructions Paul gave the church in Corinth, but we can also learn about it from the example set by the churches in Macedonia, presumably, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. The apostle appealed to their generosity in order to encourage the church in Corinth to finish what it had started. In 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, the apostle describes how they gave. He writes:

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

A number of things are worth noting. *First*, giving itself is a gift of God. Paul calls it "the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches." One author rightly observes, "'Grace' is a key word that appears ten times throughout these two chapters with differing nuances. Here it refers to human generosity, which Paul understand to be something given by God. Grace is God's unconditional benevolence toward us. When people are spontaneously generous toward others, Paul takes it as clear evidence that God's grace is working in and through them" (David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC, 365).

cont. pg. 2

Second, if Macedonian believers could afford to give, all believers can afford to give. They were poor, perhaps as poor as their Jewish brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. Their poverty might have given rise to apathy but instead it gave rise to empathy. It opened their hearts and their purse strings to others.

Third, they gave as much as they were able; they didn't hold back. In fact, they gave "even beyond their ability." The NLT puts it this way: "They gave not only what they could afford, but far more." They didn't give a specific percentage; they didn't even give proportionately. Each one decided how much to give and gave it. One might say, "If I only had \$1000, I would give it," and then give nothing at all. Better he gives the \$100 or \$10 or \$1 that he has than not give the \$1000 that he doesn't. "The gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have" (v. 12).

Fourth, they gave freely. In fact, Paul says, "they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing." Perhaps, he wasn't expecting them to give (cf., v. 5) or even discouraged some from giving (unlikely) but they insisted. They gave themselves to the Lord and then to Paul and the project.

For Discussion

Every passage is about something; every passage has a *subject*. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 and identify the *subject* of the passage. What is Paul writing to them about? Or . . .

Greg says he simply can't afford to give to the church or any charitable cause. What do you think?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 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. 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. 9 As it is written:

*"He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever."*

10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed

and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 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.

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. 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. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (NIV(c)1984)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 7.
- * Circle "all grace" in v. 8.
- * Box "so that" indicating *result* in v. 8.
- * Underline "all" (3x after "so that") in v. 8.
- * Bracket "all that you need" in v. 8.
- * Bracket "abound in every good work" in v. 8.
- * Bracket "the harvest of your righteousness" in v. 10.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 11.
- * Circle "service" in vv. 12, 13.
- * Box "not only" and "but also" indicating *contrast* in v. 12.
- * Underline "supplying" and "overflowing" in v. 12, and "hearts will go out" in v. 14.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in vv. 13, 14.
- * Circle "proved" in v. 13.
- * Next to v. 15 write, "Cf., 8:9."

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Restate the analogy in verse 6 using "works" and "earns" rather than "sows" and "reaps."
 2. Paraphrase how you should give according to verse 7.
 3. That God loves "cheerful" givers comes as no surprise. Explain (cf., vv. 14, 15).
 4. What is God able to do so you are able to give?
 5. If you give generously, God will make you rich. Is that Paul's point in verse 11? Explain.
 6. Paul refers to "this service" (v. 12) and "the service" (v. 13). To what is he referring?
 7. Explain the use of *contrast* in verse 12.
 8. "You have proved yourselves," Paul says in verse 13. How so?
 9. Explain why God deserves praise for *our* obedience and generosity (v. 13).
 10. **Discussion:** Talk about reasons why Christians should give generously according to this passage.
-

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians from Ephesus (spring A.D. 56). At the end of this letter, he replied to a question his readers had asked about "the collection for God's people" (16:1). Apparently, Gentile churches in Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia had agreed to take up a collection for Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Why believers there needed help, Paul does not say, but it likely had to do with the famine mentioned in Acts 11:27-30. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, one author writes: "This is the first of three, perhaps four, instances in Paul's letters where he mentions the collection for the 'poor' among the 'saints' in Jerusalem. According to Gal. 2:9-10, part of the agreement reached with the 'pillars' in Jerusalem regarding their mutual spheres of ministry included his willingness to 'continue to remember the poor.' Apparently this collection was a major part of his concern during his third missionary tour, which functioned for him not only to bring relief to the poor, but also as his own attempt to bring unity between Gentile and Jewish Christianity" (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 810, 811). As far as the apostle was concerned, taking an offering was clearly the right thing to do. In his letter to the Romans written from Corinth (A.D. 57) before heading to Jerusalem, he explains, "For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings" (15:27).

Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians from the same place, later in the same year (fall A.D. 56). In it he returns to the matter of the "service to the saints" (8:1-9:15), about which he had written before. Apparently, although the Corinthians were among the first to contribute to the cause (8:10), they had not finished what they started. In the meantime, the Macedonian churches had raised the bar significantly. Appealing to them as an example, Paul writes, "Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints" (8:2-4). In a nutshell, the Macedonians gave generously, freely, and cheerfully, which is exactly what the apostle would encourage the Corinthians to do (cf., 9:6-8).

With respect to the collection, it appears Paul

boasted to the Macedonians about the Corinthians (9:2) and then boasted to the Corinthians about the Macedonians (8:2-4) in order to motivate them both. As time passed, however, Paul became more concerned that his boasting about the Corinthians might prove hollow, so he decided to send Titus (8:17) and a couple of unnamed brothers (vv. 18, 22) to Corinth to ensure that a generous donation would be waiting for him when he arrived. He evidently feared that any collection taken at the last minute would be not only shamefully small but also grudgingly given (9:5).

And so before dropping the matter, he reminded his readers one last time to give generously (6-15). "Remember this," he says, "whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously" (v. 6). It seems giving generously is in the giver's best interest. This isn't a biblical proverb, but it sounds like one: "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty" (Pr 11:24). One author explains, "The sphere of giving, then, presents no exception to the inexorable rule, valid in the moral no less than in the agricultural realm, that a man reaps according to the manner of his sowing, which Paul enunciates in Gal. 6:7ff" (Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 329).

The apostle goes on to say that each one should make up his mind as to how generous he wants to be and then give freely. He should give because he is *delighted* to give and not because he *must*. Moreover, each one can give with the assurance that no one can out-give God, the archetype of a cheerful giver. Verse 8 says as much: "And God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause" (GNT). The quotation from Psalm 112 that follows substantiates his point by confirming that "whoever sows generously" is blessed.

To those worried that their generosity might lead to scarcity, Paul says, God "will always make you rich enough to be generous at all times" (GNT). They have nothing to worry about. After all, God is the one who gives givers the resources to give. "He supplies the seed to the sower" (v. 10); he is the one who enriches us so that we can generously give to others.

The gist of what follows in verses 12-14 can be expressed in a few simple statements. These

statements express what results from "the service" (i.e., generous giving). According to verse 12, generous giving supplies the needs of God's people, and overflows "in many expressions of thanks to God." According to verse 13, its recipients "praise God" for it and for the commitment to the gospel

behind it. According to verse 14, the hearts of its recipients go out in prayer to those who give because of the grace God has given them.

Paul's closing exclamation provides a fitting end to the matter. "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

The Message of the Passage

Give generously, freely, and cheerfully knowing God is the one who blesses you and blesses your generosity.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“How to Sow”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 6 **sows** . . . Cf., Gal. 6:7. "The saying has the appearance of a proverb, but there does not appear to be any precise parallel . . . The image of sowing and reaping is so self-evident that it must have been used at all times and places; and the thought that the quantity of the harvest is (other things being equal) proportionate to the quantity of seed sown is scarcely abstruse" (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, HNTC, 235, 36).

v. 6 **generously** Or "bountifully" (NKJV, ESV); cf. "Remember that the person who plants few seeds will have a small crop; the one who plants many seeds will have a large crop" (GNT).

v. 7 **should give** Lit., "each one just as he has decided in his heart." "Paul omits the imperative and thereby softens the force of what he wants them to do. Throughout these two chapters, Paul goes out of his way to avoid giving the impression that he is trying to force this project upon them" (Garland, 406). "Paul's advice is consistent with and in continuity with his instruction given in the First Letter: ' . . . each of you is to put something aside . . . as he may prosper' (1 Cor 16:3, RSV). Careful prior deliberation by the giver is implied by these instructions" (Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 437).

v. 8 **all grace** I.e., God's undeserved blessings in general. "The phrase 'all grace' is quite broad in scope, covering the material blessings and the spiritual motivation to share them" (Garland, 406). Cf., "And God will generously provide all you need" (NLT); "And God is able to give you more than you need" (GNT).

v. 8 **all** . . . "This verse is replete with comprehensive expressions (and with remarkable paronomasia-the repetition of words having the same stem-in the Greek: *pasan* . . . *panti pantote pasan* . . . *pan*) which speak of God's ability to bless his people so that they abound in good works" (Colin G. Kruse, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, TNTC, 165).

v. 8 **all that you need** Gk. *autarkeia*. In the writings of the Cynics and Stoics it denoted "an intrinsic self-sufficiency that made a man independent of external circumstances" (Harris, 10:376). "Paul used the word differently. For him *autarkeia* denoted not self-sufficiency but the sufficiency provided by God's grace, and as such it made possible not independence of others but the ability to abound in good works towards them" (Kruse, 165, 66). Cf., "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (ESV).

v. 8 **every good work** "Every good work" refers to "every act of charity." Cf., "more than enough for every good cause" (GNT); "everything you need and plenty left over to share with others" (NLT).

v. 9 **He, his** One writer explains, "From 'the wealth and riches . . . in his house' (112:3a), the God-fearing man freely distributes his gifts to the poor (112:9a). As a result, his benevolent acts of piety ('his righteousness') will never be forgotten but rather will have permanent beneficial effects in this life, as well as gaining him an eternal reward in the life to come (1129b)" (Harris, 376, 77). Paul's quotation likens the "cheerful giver" (v. 7) who "sows generously" (v. 6) to the God-fearing man of Ps 112.

v. 11 **made rich** Cf., "You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way" (ESV); "Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous" (NLT); "He will always make you rich enough to be generous at all times" (GNT). Verse 10 echoes verse 8, then verse 11a practically restates it. "Verse 11a restates v. 8, though this is not to say, as some do, that vv. 9, 10 are parenthetical. God continues to enrich the benevolent person so that he can go on enriching others by his generosity (cf. 1:4). The greater the giving, the greater the enrichment. The greater the enrichment, the greater the resources to give" (377).

v. 12 **service** Gk. *leitourgia* (cf., 8:4; 9:1). This word "was used in Paul's day for public service, such as the contributions of money or services for a specific cause by the wealthier residents of the city-state. The rich were expected to spend a portion of their wealth to promote the common good . . . But the word *leitourgia* was also used for priestly ceremonies (see Num 8:22). Paul used the word in the sense of public service (Phil 2:30) and in the sense of religious sacrifice (Phil 2:17; 4:18). Paul combines the two meanings in this verse. The rendering of their service is an act of benevolence for the common good and a spiritual offering to God" (Garland, 413; cf., Barnett, 444; Kruse, 167).

v. 13 **proved** "The saints at Jerusalem, as well as other Christians who heard of the collection, would praise God because this act of Christian service had proved the reality and vigor of the Corinthians' faith (v.13a), which may have come under suspicion at Jerusalem through reports of certain irregularities in the Corinthian church" (Harris, 378). "God does not always test us through affliction. Some of the most difficult tests come when we must prove ourselves obedient to God in times of relative prosperity" (Garland, 413).

v. 15 **incredible** Cf., 8:9. Gk. *anekdiegetos*, "incredible, not able to recount or to describe or to set forth in detail (Lenski). God's exquisite working cannot be fully described w. human words (Windisch)" (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 484).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Last weekend I spent 24 hours with hundreds of preteens from around the state who came into town for a conference designed just from them. We had the privilege of hosting the sixth grade boys from Pantego in our home so when I say I spent 24 hours with them, I literally mean, 24 hours! They don't sleep!! It was awesome! The theme of the conference was Decoding Love and the teaching revolved around helping preteens learn how to love others as Jesus did. It was such a blessing for me to watch the boys in our home do just that. I was amazed to watch them respecting each other and putting the needs of others above their own. If a sixth grade boy can do that - anyone can! Being generous with our money, time and energy starts when we stop looking at ourselves and start focusing on the needs of those around us. When I am loving others well, I want to see that their needs are met. The boys and I talked about living with JOY which means we focus on Jesus first, others next and you last. When I asked the boys who was going to look after their needs if they weren't, they replied, "Duh! God will!" Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 with your family this week and decide to love and give generously with a cheerful heart trusting that God will receive glory out of the expression of your JOY.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: 2Co 9: 6-15, Ac 4: 32-37

1. What happens when we sow sparingly?
2. What happens when we sow generously?
3. According to verse 7, what should our attitude be when we give?

What Do You Think

1. The Corinthians were giving to others who were in need. In what ways does our church do that?
2. Think of a time when someone met a need you had. How did that make you feel?
3. Read verse 15. What "incredible gift" did God give us?

What R U Going To Do

February 24 is the last Sunday we will be collecting money in the Pond, MiniMix, Mix and Fix for Baby Bottles for Life in support of the Arlington Pregnancy Center. Have your child perform a special chore to raise money to give! The winning area will be announced next Sunday!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Giving Away My Money - I share my money to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Acts 2:46 "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-five years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.