

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Chapter 9

Introduction

In Chapter eight you were told to “give yourself to the Lord” (verse 5). If you give all of yourself to the Lord, then all of your substance belongs to God. It’s not a question of how much of *your* money you give to God, but of how much of *God’s* money you keep for yourself.

As spiritual as that sounds, you still need a practical principle for determining just how much of God’s money you keep for yourself. Is it based on the tithe – where you give God 10% and keep 90% for yourself? Or should you take a vow of voluntary poverty – giving 90% to God and keeping 10% for yourself?

The practical principle Paul gives is for you to model your giving after the example of the farmer and his field. In verse ten he says that God “supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food.” God provides the farmer with a certain amount of seed. Some of it must be sown; some of it must be held back to be ground into flour to make bread. It’s up to the farmer to determine the quantity he’ll sow, and the quantity he’ll save. The farmer can’t sow all of the seed or he’ll starve. But he knows that the more he sows now, the more he’ll reap later.

When it comes to giving, **you** are the farmer and your life is the field. God provides you with a certain amount of “seed” in the form of resources. Some of it must be sown; some of it must be held back to provide for yourself. It’s up to you to determine the proportion. You should base your decision on the understanding that,

2 Corinthians 9:6 ...He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Sow as much as you can, holding back as little as you need, and you will see God “multiply the seed you have sown.”

We'll organize our thoughts around these two points: #1 Give To God As If You Were Sowing Seed Into Your Field, and #2 God Gives As If He Were Multiplying Seed From Your Field.

#1 Give To God As If You Were
Sowing Seed Into Your Field
(v1-7)

In the opening verses of chapter nine Paul is encouraging the believers at Corinth to complete an offering they committed themselves to take to help the poor saints in Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 9:1 Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you;
2 Corinthians 9:2 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.

A year earlier the church at Corinth, and all the believers in the province of "Achaia" in which Corinth was located, had committed to give towards the relief offering. They were "willing" to give; it was of their own free will and not by *compulsion* or *commandment* from Paul. Their willingness gave Paul an opportunity to boast about them to other Christians.

It was OK for Paul to boast about them as a congregation, *not* as individuals. Such boasting brought glory to God and not to any one person.

The boasting also stirred others to give. We should stir-up one another to give, and to serve, and to live for the Lord. We do it best by example rather than by exhortation. Set an example, and let others use you as an example; don't point to yourself and bring glory to yourself.

2 Corinthians 9:3 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;
2 Corinthians 9:4 lest if *some* Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.

They had *committed* to the offering, but not *completed* it. Paul had sent Titus and two other brothers to Corinth to receive the offering. Paul was himself planning to come to Corinth with one or more

brothers from Macedonia. How embarrassing would it be to arrive there and find that the Corinthians were all talk!

Count the cost before you commit. Once you commit, be faithful to complete what you have committed to do.

2 Corinthians 9:5 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.

If he arrived unannounced with members of the Macedonian churches, there would be a chance that they might give “grudgingly.” Paul went to great lengths to make certain that their giving was not manipulated or coerced. Too often churches have made your giving a grudging obligation.

Paul assumes that their giving will be a “generous gift.” He is being consistent with the principle of sowing and reaping that he is about to introduce to them. The more generous the sowing, the greater the reaping.

You should “prepare your generous gift beforehand.” Your giving should be both generous and thoughtful. Think carefully about how much you can give, and give as much as you can.

OK, so how should you think? And how much can you give? **Look to the farmer!**

2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Giving is like sowing seed into your field. The more seed you sow, the greater the yield at harvest time. By starting with this principle, Paul elevates your thinking. It’s not a matter of how *little* you can give; it’s a matter of how *much* you can give! The farmer wants to sow as much as he can. You should want to give as much as you can. Just how much is up to you.

2 Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

Again and again Paul hammers home the understanding that your giving is not to be manipulated or coerced, and it is not to be a grudging response to the appeals of “necessity” you hear. Concerning such appeals, God says in Psalm 50:12,

Psalm 50:12 “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness.”

God “loves a cheerful giver.” Paul isn’t saying that God only loves givers; he’s saying that lovers give to one another. Giving is the natural response of love for another. When you want to know if God loves you, you remember that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” Your giving to God is a response of love from your heart to Him.

“Cheerful” is from a root word where we get our word *hilarious*. The receiving of the offering should be the most hilarious moment of your week!

These verses clearly are about giving money, but I want to expand the principle of sowing and reaping for just a moment. Survey your various “fields”: Marriage... Family... Job... Church... These are all fields you sow into. The more you sow into each of those fields, the greater your harvest of fruit will be. How much time, energy, and effort are you sowing into your marriage? Into raising your kids? If you lack fruitfulness, it could be on account of your lack of sowing into those fields.

Give to God as if you were a farmer sowing seed into your fields. Then,

#2 God Gives As If He Were Multiplying Seed From Your Field (v8-15)

Most Christians have heard someone say “You can’t outgive God.” It is a true statement. It is, however, sometimes misused. If it is used to encourage you to give more only so you will get more, then it is being misused. You don’t give \$10.00 in order to receive \$100.00 back from God. That is simply carnal, a carnal motivation. We do not want to be carnal; we want to be spiritual.

When a farmer sows seed into his field, God multiplies the seed. When you sow seed into your “fields,” God multiplies your seed. “You can’t outgive God” means that God will multiply **spiritual fruit** in your life as you give yourself and your substance to Him.

2 Corinthians 9:8 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.

“All,” “always,” “all,” and “abundance” are the words that jump out at you from this verse. “Sufficiency” means *adequate resources within*. It is a promise of spiritual adequacy, not material prosperity. God will bless you spiritually as you give materially. To illustrate, Paul quotes from Psalm 112:9,

2 Corinthians 9:9 As it is written: *“He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”*

The “he” in this verse is not God, it’s **you**. The verse compares giving to help the poor to dispersing seed into the field. The believer who sows will reap “righteousness” which “endures forever.” The word “righteousness” here is a reminder that you are constantly being transformed into the image of Jesus until one day God completes His work in you in eternity. Giving is part of the process God uses to transform you. The more you give, the more you are becoming like your Lord, Who gave Himself for you.

2 Corinthians 9:10 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,

We began with this verse in our introduction because it is the conclusion of the matter. God supplies your substance. Sure, you work hard and apply biblical principles in your life. Nevertheless your wealth or poverty is up to God to determine. Whatever you have in terms of resources has been supplied to you by God. It is your seed. Some of it must be sown; some of it must be held back to provide for yourself. It’s up to you to determine the proportion. You will want to sow as much as possible. One commentator said, “You ought to provide for your necessities, not subsidize your luxuries.” The more you sow, the more fruit you will reap in your life as God multiplies what you’ve sown.

Like a farmer, you must be patient and wait for the harvest. Again, let me take this out of the realm of money for a moment in order to offer an illustration. You young parents: You are sowing into the lives of your children. **You must be patient for about eighteen years!** You will reap what you've sown; sow generously.

Paul has been focusing on the affect giving has on your own life. Your giving also affects others. It affects them both materially and spiritually. Your giving affects them spiritually by prompting them to *thanksgiving, praise, and prayer.*

Your giving prompts thanksgiving:

2 Corinthians 9:11 while *you are* enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

2 Corinthians 9:12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,

Your “liberality” in giving “enriches” you “in everything.” The real point of verses eleven and twelve is found in the word “thanksgiving.” Your generous giving prompts others to offer up “thanksgiving to God.” Sure, it provides practical assistance to them; but Paul puts a greater emphasis on how your giving “abounds through many thanksgivings to God.” The spiritual affect is much more important.

Let me give you an example. You give in the morning offering. We then give to missionaries in India through Gospel for Asia... Or to folks who have temporary financial needs through our Deacon's Fund... Their needs are met; but they also are spiritually refreshed and offer thanksgiving to God as they are humbled by His remembrance of them through you.

Your giving prompts praise:

2 Corinthians 9:13 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*,

Your generous, unforced, giving is a “ministry” that “proves” you have been touched by the Spirit of God. Your generous, unforced, giving is an act of “obedience” which can only be motivated by the Lord and it thus is evidence of your “confession” of faith in the “gospel.” Don't get me wrong: Giving is not a work by which you gain or maintain

your salvation. But it is a good work by which you give proof you are saved. As a result, others “glorify God.” They offer Him praise as they see **God working in you**.

Your giving prompts prayer:

2 Corinthians 9:14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.

When your giving benefits others, they respond by praying to God for you. Their prayers for you are more valuable than the resources you provided for them! Right now, missionaries who are literally risking their lives are praying for you because of the support we send them.

Conclusion

Christians are drawn to *figures* and *formulas*. Paul has accommodated us to a certain extent:

1. He’s given us a figure – the farmer sowing his field.
2. He’s given us a formula – sow bountifully and you will reap bountifully.

As he closes, he elevates our thinking beyond figures and formulas. In a sense, all you really need to know about giving is what he says in verse fifteen:

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks *be* to God for His indescribable gift!

Jesus Christ is “God’s indescribable gift.” “Indescribable” means *unable to tell fully*. We can never fully tell all the wonder of God’s gift of Jesus Christ. We can only marvel that,

John 3:16 ...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Let me read a series of verses about Jesus and giving:

Galatians 1:4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Ephesians 5:25 ...Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,
Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

1 Timothy 2:6 [Jesus] gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,

Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

Giving is the language of the Lord's love for you. One writer said,

"Loving... has no other speech... Love finds it's very life in giving itself away."

Paul gives us figures and formulas... But he ends by saying that the only figure you need is the cross, and the only formula is John 3:16.

This is all you need to know about giving: God gave His Son for you; Jesus gave Himself for you; **You** give yourself to God.