

Generosity

Life Group Discussion Guide on Giving

Giving can sometimes be a touchy or unpopular subject within churches. Too often, we try to generate feelings of guilt around something most people agree we should be doing — being generous with our money.

In our message about this topic we covered two principles from the Old Testament that help inform us on how we should give.

1. The Principle of the First Fruits
2. The Principle of the Sabbath

The message answers these questions:

- What are these principles?
- Even though these principles come from Mosaic Law, what do they teach us about life as a New Testament Christian?
- What do they have to do with giving?

One New Testament passage that is a great encouragement on how to give can be found in 2 Corinthians 9:

9 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints,² for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending^[a] the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift^[b] you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.^[c]

6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully^[d] will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, 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 having all sufficiency^[e] in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.”

10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your

Life Group Discussion Guide

seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they[f] will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

The church at Corinth lived in a city with great wealth. Paul was ministering in Macedonia, an area of relative poverty.

The poorer Macedonians had sacrificially given to help believers in Jerusalem who were in dire need. Paul did not have to ask the Macedonians to give. They begged for the opportunity once they heard about the need.

Now Paul is asking the Corinthians not to be outdone by their poorer brethren. He is sending Titus to collect gifts and take them as relief to the church at Jerusalem. This letter was written, in part, to encourage the Corinthians to make preparations to give to the church at Jerusalem.

- How does this passage help us to understand how we should give in the American church?
- What kinds of preparations do you think Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to make?
- Do you think Paul is urging a friendly “competition” of generosity?
- How can we speak about our own giving in a way that is not boastful, but encourages others to give?
- What sorts of blessings do you think Paul is speaking about coming to those who are generous?

When considering giving to something, consider these 4 practical principles:

Saying yes to one thing requires that you say no to five things.

This principle also applies with how you plan to spend your time. We all have finite resources. We must choose wisely how to spend those. Another way of saying this is that you will never be able to maximize your generosity until you make a budget and live by it.

The most generous people are people who plan to be generous.

Austin told us a few weeks ago to be prepared for good works. This means that we structure our time, our family life, and our finances to have something available for good works.

A simpler life is a more fulfilling life.

People who are generous givers always tell me that they are far more fulfilled by giving than

they are on the toys/clothes/vacations that they could have bought for themselves.

Joy is a more powerful motivation than guilt.

Many people may not give because they feel guilty about only being able to contribute a small amount. This type of guilt will never produce fruit.

Let's say your goal is to give 10% of your income, but you are only able to give away 1%. Isn't it better to give the 1% that you can instead of beating yourself up over not being able to give?

Giving is an act of grace. That means that when we give out of right motives, God is never upset with the amount.

If you are able to give \$5, give that. The important thing is that God will use the joy you receive from participating in his work to motivate you to do what is necessary to give more.

Bonus Tip: Give to where you are also invested with your time, prayers, emotion, and relationships.

- Which of these five principles resonate with you?
- What can you change in your life to enjoy God more and allow for more generosity?