

MULTIPLY WEEK 3

Stewarding Your Money: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

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The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 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. As it is written,

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

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they 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, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Introduction

The gospel leaves no part of our lives unaffected. There is no first or last part that we hold back from our Savior. He gave his all to redeem all of us. Regarding money, God’s Word shows us the effect the gospel should have on the way Christians understand and steward their money. Jesus’ sacrificial love for us — giving up everything so that we could inherit the riches of Heaven — helps us develop a joyful and generous attitude toward our

material possessions and become people who put God's character (and the gospel) on display.

Being generous then, is the natural, consistent, and occasionally spontaneous giving of our material possessions to God's service and to our communities so that God's Kingdom would advance. Understanding the riches we have already received in Christ not only liberates us from excessive concern over our wealth, talents, and time but also motivates us to invest them in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Count Nicolaus Zinzendorf is an example of someone who set aside a life of wealth, politics, and privilege to follow God's call to missions. He founded the Moravian Church, which triggered the modern missions movement. Zinzendorf felt "sure that they [who don't know God] would embrace the gospel if only someone could share it with them." Zinzendorf's money reflected his heart; he leveraged all of his massive wealth to train, fund, and send hundreds of missionaries throughout the world.

In 2 Corinthians 9:6, Paul appeals to the law of sowing (the effort) and reaping (the result). Whatever one sows, that will he reap. Paul applies this farming principle to the financial realm, indicating that generous sowing results in bountiful reaping. Paul's desire is to stir our hearts to consider what a joyful attitude toward generosity can produce: a bountiful and eternal harvest. In addition he promises that if we give cheerfully (v. 7) and bountifully, we will experience God's grace in deeper and more powerful ways (v. 8-9). It is important to remember, as Paul and Zinzendorf both knew well, that this is not a strategy to get materially wealthy. This is not Wall Street; the return on investment may have nothing to do with money. Still, God honors those who have been faithful with little.

Of course, we know there are seasons when the harvest is not as plentiful as we'd like. But this is a challenge for us to honor God with our money and then fully depend on him to provide for us and multiply our ability to give (v. 10). The ultimate motivation for giving generously is the glory of God. Paul says, "God loves a cheerful giver" (v. 7), "which through us will produce thanksgiving to God" (v. 11). At the heart of true giving is a passion to exalt the Ultimate Giver, God himself. In fact, when we give, we are most like God.

Multiplication Principle

In verses 10 to 15, we see why God gives us resources for generosity. In verse 10, managing your wealth is a way to harvest your righteousness. In verse 11, God will enrich you so that you can be generous. God gives you opportunities to show off the Christ-like character that he has implanted and promises to complete in you. This part of God's multiplication principle is about your growth as a person, which you can display in different ways through riches or poverty. But that's not the end. God is also giving you the opportunity to multiply praise and thanksgiving to him! When other people see you act generously, they will be reminded of Christ and will multiply their praise to him, which he deserves beyond measure. Our possessions are our opportunity to get caught up in a much larger story, which is ultimately about God's glory.

Regardless of what we get in return for our giving, magnifying our God is the greatest reason to give. God is not after our reluctant and resentful giving. He wants us to be cheerful and grateful as we give. We should smile as we give and jump at any chance we have to do it. Nothing should make us more joyful and generous than knowing that we are bringing pleasure to our Father as we give generously, just as he also gave to us generously.

If we see things as Jesus did, we won't think of using our money for God's Kingdom as a loss. As Hudson Taylor, missionary to China, learned, "God wants you to have something far better than riches and gold, and that is helpless dependence upon him."

Let us remember that it is not what you *give* but what you *keep* that determines your lifestyle.

In the end, gospel-saturated stewardship will look different from person to person and church to church, but we are all called to be good stewards — to prioritize and sacrifice for King Jesus as overflow from a heart that is gripped by the gospel; otherwise, it becomes a joyless and fruitless effort of self-righteousness. We want to be a people that is known for being generous givers as we embrace lifestyles that free up money to invest in helping others and furthering the progress of the gospel.

Study Questions

1. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. What does Paul mean when he says, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully”? What are some examples of this in your life?

2. Why does Paul warn us against giving “reluctantly or under compulsion”?

3. How does God get glory through the Church’s generosity?

Reflection Questions

1. Why do we have a tendency to look to materialism rather than to God for satisfaction? How do we fight against this tendency?

2. Is the glory of God your main motivation for giving? Would you describe your giving as cheerful or begrudging? Delight or drudgery? How might this idea change how you are currently giving?

3. What steps do you need to take in order to maintain a proper attitude toward material things while living in this culture? What will the result be in your life if you enter into such an examination of your motives and actions regarding money?

Prayer Guide

Pray 2 Corinthians 8:9, 11 and 9:7-13.

Pray Deep:

- Thank Jesus for his sacrificial love for you — giving up everything so that you could inherit the riches of Heaven (2 Corinthians 8:9).
- Ask God to help your readiness to be generous be matched by your completion of it (2 Corinthians 8:11).
- God does not want reluctant or compulsory gifts; therefore ask him to give you a clear and cheerful heart toward generosity (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Pray Wide:

- Ask God to pour his grace out on our church, “so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, [we] may abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).
- Pray that our church would lead many to “glorify God because of [our] submission that comes from [our] confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of [our] contribution” to his Kingdom work (2 Corinthians 9:13).

Further Reading

“Three Ways the Gospel Changes Our Generosity”

by J.D. Greear, jdgreear.com

“How to Identify and Redeem Your ‘Money Motivators’”

by Chad S. Hamilton, thegospelcoalition.org

The Treasure Principle: Unlocking the Secret of Joyful Giving

by Randy Alcorn