

How Should We Give? Some reflections from 2Corinthians

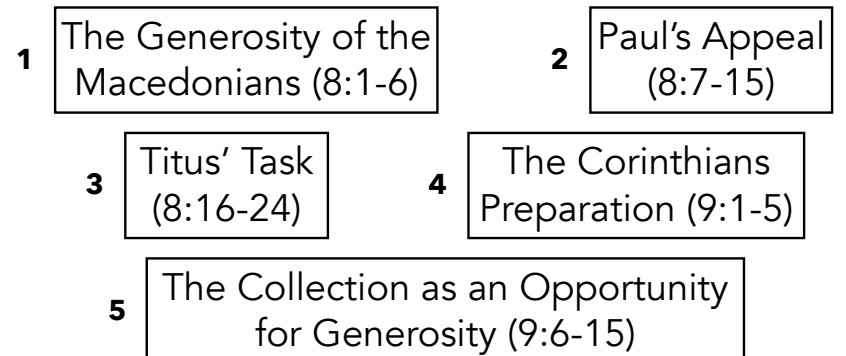
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How Should We Give?

Paul's most theological discussion of giving is found in 2Corinthians 8:1-9:15, which concerns the Jerusalem collection (cf. 1Cor 16:1-4; Rom 15:25-32; Gal 2:9-10).

- This section begins and ends with grace (8:1; 9:14-15).
- Understands Christian giving as a gift from a gracious God, who is the one who enables Christians to serve and bless one another generously.

The Flow of 2Corinthians 8-9



1 Give Freely

All Christian giving is voluntary, an act of free will, a non-compulsory sharing of one's time, talent, and treasures as an expression of gratitude to God.

- The example of the Macedonians (2Cor 8:3).
- The example of Christ (2Cor 8:9; Matt 10:8).
- The example of God.

1 Give Freely

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2Corinthians 9:7, NIV).

1 Give Freely

"We give because we are givers, because Christ living in us is a giver. Informing every seemingly small act of Christian giving is a change in our very being, a transformation of a person from being one who either illicitly takes or merely legitimately acquires, into being one who beneficently gives.... The same is true of us when we give freely. Living into our new selves, we are always already where the command would want us to be" (Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge*, 66-67).

2 Give Proportionately

Graduated or proportional giving according to your resources.

- Give "in keeping with your income" (1Cor 16:2), "according to your means" (2Cor 8:11), "according to what one has, not according to what one does not have" (2Cor 8:12).
- No one can claim an exemption from the responsibility of giving. God can multiply even the smallest of gifts.

2 Give Proportionately

“Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, ¹⁵as it is written: ‘The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little’” (2Cor 8:13-15).

2 Give Proportionately

In God’s “mana economy” (Exod 16:18), there is mutual sharing so that everyone has enough.

- An expression of the unity of the church.
- The principle of global “equality” or “fairness” (2Cor 8:14).

2 Give Proportionately

“Paul is not enunciating the ideal of some fully egalitarian communism. But he does recognize that there are extremes of wealth and poverty which are intolerable in the Christian community. If those who are better off will simply provide from their surplus, all of the most basic human needs of the more impoverished will be met” (Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions*, 194).

2 Give Proportionately

This is why a “one size fits all” 10% tithe ultimately doesn’t align with Paul’s teaching.

“Whereas a fixed 10 percent would more likely be negligible for someone with an income of \$100,000, it could well cripple a person with an income of \$10,000” (Linda Belleville, *2Corinthians*, 220).

3 Give as a Spiritual Discipline

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”
(Matt 6:21).

- Jesus’ point is how we use our stuff — our time, talents, and treasure — *determines what sort of people we become.*
- As Christ followers, being generous with our time, talents, and treasure is an act of faith and faithfulness.

3 Give as a Spiritual Discipline

- Give with thought and discernment (2Cor 9:7).
- Give regularly (1Cor 16:2).
- Follow through on commitments (2Cor 8:6-7, 11).
- All of this may be considered part of your “true and proper worship” (Rom 12:1) that brings thanksgiving to God (2Cor 9:11-12).

4 Give Generously

We are called to give with open ended generosity.

- “In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity... They gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability” (2Cor 8:2-3).
- “But since you excel in everything... see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (2Cor 8:7).
- “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (2Cor 9:6).