

**PP 360° Giving: Give Upward and Be Enriched in Every Way!**

Text **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

1/10-11, 2015

I grew up not only watching my parents give their money away, but I was allowed to participate, even as a little boy putting their offering into the plate as it passed by during church. They supported their church first, then missionaries and ministries, teaching me generous giving. There were times when dad didn't have work as a contractor, yet they never stopped giving. When the box of powdered milk was on the counter, things were getting tight, yet they still gave. Even since my father's death, my mother, living on her schoolteacher pension and SS, she still gives generously to her church and missionaries. In the early 1960's, believe it or not, my mother's car stalled on the railroad tracks and she was hit by a train, which among other serious injuries, destroyed her teeth. She's had dentures since then, and I learned this last week that some of the teeth in her dentures are broken. She could pay for them, if she stopped giving her money to ministry and missionaries, but she won't, so she continues to put off new dentures until she can save up for them. Some would think how sad that is, but I think that she is a hero, one of God's generous givers!!

**PP** Would you describe yourself as a generous giver?

*Generous giving proceeds from a joyful heart of faith that sees material possessions as means of blessing others and laying up treasures in eternity*

Is this you, is this me?

I want the grip of materialism, greed, financial anxiety to be eradicated from my heart and I thank those of you who give so generously for encouraging my own growth in giving. And what a great time to look at becoming a generous giver, as we start the year, and at the same time give thanks for what the Lord has provided for our church.

I'm not giving this sermon series because we are struggling financially as a church.

We finished last year with income exceeding our expenses by approximately \$100,000.

360° Giving is not directly about stewardship, debt reduction, or investment planning, it is about God's people being set free from the grip of materialism and joyfully setting our hearts on eternal treasures.

**PP 1-Generous givers have a promise**

*"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully"* **2 Corinthians 9:6**

This almost sounds Old Testament doesn't it, kind of a throwback verse?

**PP** *"Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed."* **Proverbs 19:17**

**PP** *"Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine."* **Proverbs 3:9-10**

These are favorites of prosperity preachers, promising that God wants every Christian to be rich. One made this promise as donors paid in credit cards, *"As you use your faith, God is going to wipeout your credit card debts"*

Word Faith teachers teach that faith is a substance, the same substance that God Himself used to create the world, and that a Christian can use it to speak wealth into existence

One wrote, *"If you want success, if you want wisdom, if you want to be prosperous and healthy, you're going to have to do more than meditate and believe; you must boldly declare words of faith and victory over yourself and your family"* Your Best Life Now, p.132

Many of them point to their multi-million dollar homes and luxury cars as proof that name it claim it works!

They only give one part of a two part reason to generously give

Let me tell you the first part first, it's called the *Law of the Harvest*...a farmer reaps in proportion to what he sows, so **'sow bountifully'**

You want more harvest, then sow more seed, give generously as God directs

**'bountifully'** means blessing, and those who give as a blessing to others will experience God's blessings in return

But those who hold onto their possessions with an ownership mentality will experience God holding onto His blessings

In God's kingdom, prosperity does not come from greedy self-indulgence, but generous giving

**PP** *"One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."* Proverbs 11:24-25

And we are taught to sow that seed wisely, with principles undergirding how we do

## **PP 2-Generous givers give on principle**

*"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

**PP a.** *They give uniquely... 'Each one must give'*

Asking or expecting each person to give \$100 or \$200 or any uniform amount has no biblical grounds...*If everyone here gave \$50 we would meet our annual fund-raising goals*

Giving is something each one of us must do as God supplies and directs

**PP b.** *They give decisively... 'as he has decided in his heart'*

Not reactively, or without thought, opening our wallets to see what's in there, but with great thought, careful consideration

You put a great deal of thought into giving beforehand, visualizing the impact your gift will have on the recipient, the relief they will register, the hope they will feel

On the spot giving is often not done in wisdom and discernment, nor is it often generous enough

**PP c.** *They give freely... 'not reluctantly or under compulsion'*

Not reluctantly, or else we're giving like an owner, not a steward of God's resources

Not from coercion that if you don't give, calamity will descend on you from on high

Or from false promises that if you do give, you will get back a hundred-fold for your pleasure

Not pressured to give by a family member, or gut-wrenching tv ad, or manipulative pastor

**PP** *d. They give cheerfully... 'for God loves a cheerful giver.'*

Jesus said, *'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'* Acts 20:35

It's true...how enjoyable it is to be able to bless someone you know will receive it wisely

But the most amazing statement is this, *'God loves a cheerful giver'*

There is something about His people who give generously that pulls affection His heart

But when God gives bountifully to generous givers, He will do so for a reason

### **PP 3-Generous givers receive more, but for a reason**

Giving is difficult for most people, and Andy Stanley believes it is less because of greed, and more due to plain old fear

And the Apostle Paul addresses this: *"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.'"* 9:8-9

*'all grace abound'* means God will give you more than enough material blessings and the inward spiritual motivation to share them

God is able to out-give you, and to provide for what you give away

Do you ever think of what you could do with the money that you give to others or to church?

You could afford the addition to the house, a nice car, better vacations, take an easier, less-paying job

But God is able to fill the gap that your giving creates, that you would have *'sufficiency in all things at all times'*, you would have all that you really need, you will be content

The fact is that the majority of Christians do not trust God at His Word!

Yet God hundreds of times in His Word, entreats His people to trust Him, and give!

**PP** *"You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake."* Deuteronomy 15:10

A few minutes ago, I told you that Prosperity preachers teach the first part which is to sow bountifully, but they don't teach the second part very faithfully

And here it is...God will bless richly those who will give generously so they will be able to give even more

*"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."* 9:10

Why? *"You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way"* 9:11

Sow liberally, sow continuously, sow generously, and you will reap much in order to reinvest into God's kingdom

We need more of God's people to give of God's money to increase God's work!

Christian, be free from the ownership mentality, and give generously, investing in God's work, here, and other places

Even the seeds we sow, the possessions we give generously were given to us by God, not ourselves, and not ultimately by other people

You get an increase, ask the Lord if He has plans for that money before you think of what you would like to get with it

You make more sales this month, then ask God why He gave you that increase!  
 You get an inheritance, Lord, did you bring this my way to generously give some or all away?

The fear is that if we give generously we will not have enough, but God will continually provide the seed we need as we give it away, and will even multiply it so we can give more!  
 Fear holds us back, faith propels us upward to trust God as we give generously!

***“For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.” 9:12***

#### **PP 4-Generous givers bless outward and upward**

The highest goal we’re capable of is living in such a way that our lives bless both others and God  
 Now I want you to hear this very clearly, it is of utmost importance!

We will not become generous givers because I am encouraging you to, or because you are going to make it a New Year resolution and double down on your effort!!

We will not succeed by effort alone!

***“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.” 9:13-14***

**PP** We will become generous givers when ***“the surpassing grace of God”*** ignites with power in us, setting us free from fear and greed and free to set our hearts on treasures in heaven

**PP** *Giving is grace spilling out from our hearts through generosity*

And it affects those around us, as ***‘their approval of’*** our generosity will move them to ***‘glorify God’***

We glorify God when we live in such a way that we make Him famous and not ourselves!

A generous giver does just that!

All because the ***‘surpassing grace of God’*** has proven itself effective in our hearts to give upward, enriching us in every way

**PP** John Wesley once said, *‘Having, first, gained all you can, and, secondly saved all you can, then give all you can.’*

He practiced what he preached, and when he died at the age of 87, most of the 30,000 pounds he had earned in his life had been given away

God’s grace had set Wesley free from the grip of money to give upward and outward!

#### **PP 5-Generous givers demonstrate the gospel**

***“Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!” 2 Corinthians 9: 15***

The basis of our generosity is our generously giving God, and none of His gifts is greater than the gift of His Son Jesus Christ

**PP** The Apostle Paul wrote how incredible it is when we think about ***“the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ” Romans 5:15***

Knowing how greatly God, the Ruler and Creator of all there is, has given to us is the fountainhead, the prime mover of the our own generosity

Think on this a moment: God gave what was most precious to Him, His Son, to go and die for a people who did not deserve it, in order to save them from an eternity of suffering in hell

Now what do you possess that you are not willing to give to God if He asks for it?

What if He asked you to take your retirement account and give it away?

What if He asked you to downsize your home to free up monies to give to a ministry?

What if He asked you to increase how much you give to this church starting now?

What if He asked you to personally underwrite one of our missionaries this year?

**PP** *"I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."* Martin Luther

**PP** (Put all on one slide as a summary) Give generously and you will reap bountifully

Give generously on principle: uniquely, decisively, freely and cheerfully

Give generously, reap bountifully, in order that you may give even more

Give generously to God's work and bring glory to our great God

Give generously because God has given us His very Son!

I hope to end each sermon by answering practically a question or two that are often asked

***How do I overcome the fear in giving more to the Lord?***

Interestingly, God actually gives us permission to test Him in this... ***"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."*** Malachi 3:10

But notice that you are to bring the whole tithe

If you are giving nothing now, or 2-3%, and you agree to increase that to 4% to play it safe, you will not experience God's miraculous providence

We'll talk in this series about whether Christians today are still commanded to tithe, but let

Randy Alcorn at least encourage us, *"The tithe, 10%, is the training wheels for giving"*

If you are going to take God's challenge, then give generously with no holding back

And notice what God says in Malachi, He will pour down blessings *'until there is no more need'*

Until He has given us enough to wisely assist those in true and genuine need all around us

Friends, give generously, wisely, cheerfully, uniquely, and God will bless you so that you can turn around and give even more for His work!

Amen!!

Pray