



# Stewardship of Resources

## Summary and Goal

Generosity that is fueled by thanksgiving for the great mercy and kindness of God is a powerful adornment of the gospel of Jesus Christ that God can use to draw people to Himself. Pre-enlist someone to share a gospel conversation testimony. Afterwards, ask for a show of hands of who has had a gospel conversation in the last month. Record that number and pause to pray for the lost and searching.

### **Main Passages**

2 Corinthians 9:6-14

### **Session Outline**

1. Giving Is Worship (Phil. 4:15-20)
2. Principles of Generous Living (2 Cor. 9:6-9)
3. Rewards of Generous Living (2 Cor. 9:10-14)

### **Theological Theme**

God is sovereign over His creation. This means that everything His people have in their possession is not ultimately theirs to do with whatever they like. God owns all things and people are merely given stewardship over them.

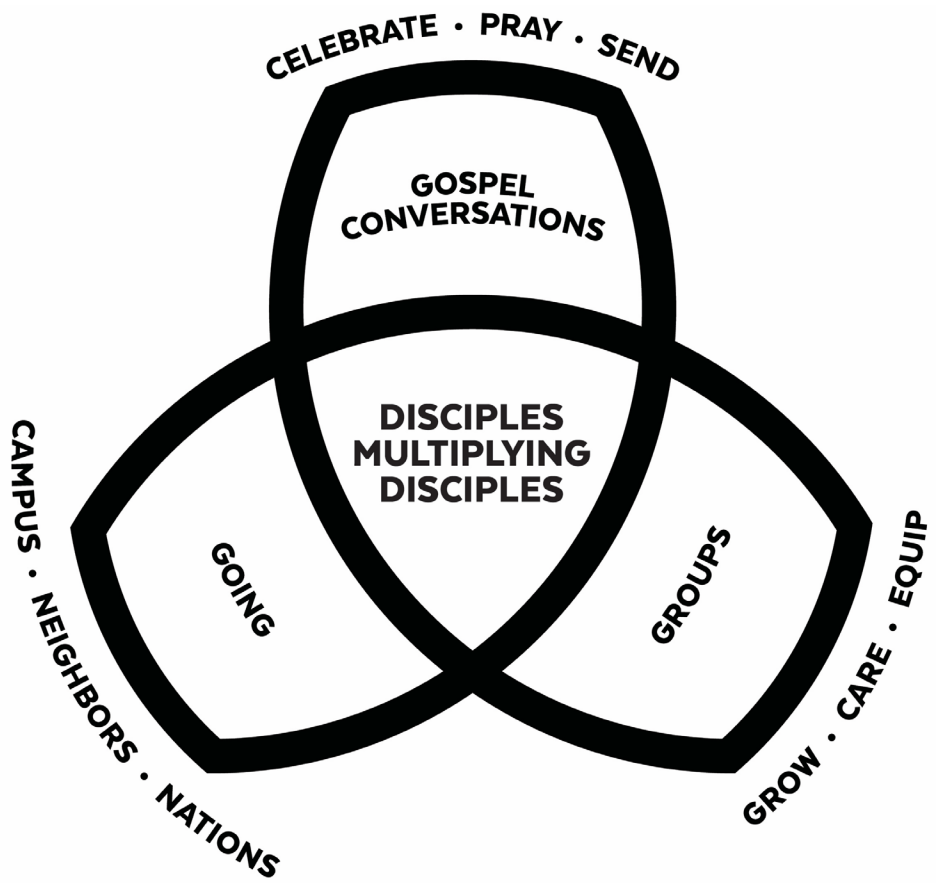
### **Christ Connection**

Christians steward their possessions with grace-inspired generosity because they have been the recipients of a great and glorious generosity in the coming of Christ, His death, and their redemption.

### **Missional Application**

The Christian's grace-inspired generosity is directed toward not only their brothers and sisters in Christ, but to the unbelieving world. This kind of generosity quiets those who revile the Christian faith and beautifully adorns the gospel of Jesus Christ.

# Disciples Multiplying Disciples



# 4

## Session Plan

# Stewardship of Resources

### ? For Further Discussion

Why is it easier to be selfish than to be generous? When is it the hardest to be generous? When does it come easily?

### Introduction

- ? When have you experienced happiness over spending money on someone else rather than yourself? What benefit is there from spending on someone else that we don't get from spending on ourselves?
- ? Can you think of any examples or teachings in the Bible concerning generosity? How would you sum up the Bible's overall teaching about generosity?

Just as God's love for the world resulted in His giving Christ unto the world, so does the Christian's love for God result in their giving of their resources unto Him. Of course, God needs nothing, but He calls on Christians to be generous in their living. Because sacrificial giving is an act of obedience, it is also an act of worship. Christians who give in faith and obedience worship God. Furthermore, in God's Word Christians find helpful principles about giving and insight about the results of giving.

### 1. Giving is Worship (Phil. 4:15-20)

In Philippians 4:15-20, Paul described the gifts that the church of Philippi sent to him via Epaphroditus. We can't know with confidence the exact nature of the gift, but it is a safe assumption that at least a part, and maybe all, of the gift was money to assist him in his ministry. Through their sacrificial gifts, Paul's needs were met, and he was able to continue on in the work that the Lord called him to pursue.

- ? What did Paul mean by "the profit that is increasing to your account" in verse 17? How does this apply to us today?
- ? In verse 18, Paul tried to help them see that though he received the gift, it was actually an act of worship to God. Why would that be so?
- ? Application: According to this passage, what is the benefit of regular generosity? Why should we view our generosity as an act of worship to God?

## 2. Principles of Generous Living (2 Cor. 9:6-9)

In this passage, Paul taught how Christian giving is to be done. Believers are to give generously and cheerfully. Giving will be neither generous nor cheerful if givers are anxious about meeting their own needs. Christians may have reasoned that the more they gave, the less they would have, and the more likely they would become dependent on the giving of others.

- ① When we talk about a return on investment in Kingdom giving, do we mean dollars and cents? What is dangerous about making the basis of our investment returned money?
- ② Do you think a Christian's attitude and posture matter when they give sacrificially and invest in Kingdom work?
- ③ Application: Do those close to you consider you to be a generous person? Is generosity reflected in both your heart and your hands? What needs to change?

## 3. Rewards of Generous Living (2 Cor. 9:10-14)

Giving sacrificially to others and to kingdom work is a safeguard for those who are in Christ. Paul said that giving would increase the harvest of the believers' righteousness. In other words, living generous was going to help the Corinthians be more like Jesus. Giving away material resources forces Christians to remember that their true treasure isn't found here on earth. It forces them to rely more upon God and to recognize idols in their lives. All of this contributes to their sanctification.

- ① What is the connection between generosity and spiritual growth? How have you experienced this?
- ② According to verse 12, how else does generosity result in spiritual growth? How did Paul describe their expression of gratitude? What characterized their thanksgiving?
- ③ Application: What motivates you to generosity? How is generosity connected to the gospel?

## Conclusion

- ① Are you a generous person? What are some specific ways you have been generous this past week? What were some missed opportunities of generosity?  
Who do you find yourself being more generous toward? Why? Is there anyone to whom it is hard to be generous? How might you seek to grow in this area?
- ② What does generosity have to do with seeking to have gospel conversations? Should you be generous also toward non-believers? Why or why not?
- ③ Remember to invite your unconnected friends, neighbors and co-workers to your group's Zoom meeting the week of November 8th.



## Expanded Session Content

# Stewardship of Resources

### Introduction

In a study conducted in Zurich, researchers found that being generous tends to make the giver happier. In this study, two groups of people were given \$100 each. The first group was instructed to spend the money on someone else while the second group was instructed to spend it on themselves. It turned out that those who used the money to help others were happier after the money was spent than the group that used the money on themselves.<sup>1</sup>

- ❓ When have you experienced happiness over spending money on someone else rather than yourself? What benefit is there from spending on someone else that we don't get from spending on ourselves?
- ❓ Why is it easier to be selfish than to be generous? When is it the hardest to be generous? When does it come easily?
- ❓ Can you think of any examples or teachings in the Bible concerning generosity? How would you sum up the Bible's overall teaching about generosity?

Almost everyone would agree that being generous is a virtue and a characteristic to be cultivated and encouraged. However, it is much easier to assent to the theory than to practice the principle in everyday life. Our reluctance to put others first is due, at least in part, to sin. The reality of human nature is that people are primarily concerned about self-preservation. That is their nature. In general, we are concerned first and foremost about our own preferences, desires, and happiness. Generosity is oftentimes painful because it goes against what the natural self desires and values. To be generous, a person has to look beyond themselves and be motivated by something deeper than self-preservation.

It seems counter-intuitive, but in the Christian life, generosity actually does enrich believers. It's true that there are emotional and psychological benefits associated with giving that social scientists have actually quantified. But there are spiritual benefits as well. It is helpful to


understand the biblical principles of generosity and also the promised rewards. These truths are found in 2 Corinthians 9:6-14. But first let's look closely at a verse found in Philippians 4 to help us frame our understanding of generosity.

## Session Summary

Just as God's love for the world resulted in His giving Christ unto the world, so does the Christian's love for God result in their giving of their resources unto Him. Of course, God needs nothing, but He calls on Christians to be generous in their living. Because sacrificial giving is an act of obedience, it is also an act of worship. Christians who give in faith and obedience worship God. Furthermore, in God's Word Christians find helpful principles about giving and insight about the results of giving.


### 1. Giving is Worship (Phil. 4:15-20)

Our primary text for today is 2 Corinthians 9, in which Paul gave instruction concerning giving to the Corinthian church. But first, we will lay a foundation for giving from Paul's teaching to the Philippian church. In Philippians 4:15-20, Paul described the gifts that the church of Philippi sent to him via Epaphroditus. We can't know with confidence the exact nature of the gift, but it is a safe assumption that at least a part, and maybe all, of the gift was money to assist him in his ministry. Through their sacrificial gifts, Paul's needs were met, and he was able to continue on in the work that the Lord called him to pursue.


 What did Paul mean by "the profit that is increasing to your account" in verse 17? How does this apply to us today?

Paul stated clearly that the service the Philippians rendered to him—the kindness they showed him—was ultimately for their benefit. While what they had done was certainly a sacrifice, Paul assured them that it was not a sacrifice without reward.

The implication is that they should be grateful for the opportunity to serve because it resulted in profit being accrued to their accounts. In other words, God saw their sacrifice, and He would reward them for it. This principle is expressed time and again in the Bible (see also 2 Cor. 9:6; Deut. 15:10; Ps. 37:25; Prov. 11:25; Prov. 19:17; Mal. 3:10).

 In verse 18, Paul tried to help them see that though he received the gift, it was actually an act of worship to God. Why would that be so?

Paul used the language of Old Testament worship to explain the nature of the Philippians' gift. He said it was a "fragrant offering." This phrase is common in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) and is parallel with the "pleasing aroma" of sacrifices to God that we see in Genesis 8:21, Exodus 29:18, and Leviticus 4:31. The literal offerings of the Old Testament system were no longer in effect because of Christ's work on the cross, but the principle behind this sort of sacrificial worship to God carried over. The Philippians' gift was an act of worship because it was given in faith and obedience for the purposes of the kingdom. Paul was the steward who would be managing it, but the gift was safeguarded in the coffers of the King.

 Application: According to this passage, what is the benefit of regular generosity? Why should we view our generosity as an act of worship to God?

## God is Able (v. 8)


Knowing that God is favorably predisposed to those who give cheerfully is important because of God's ability to bless. Paul focused on God's ability, not his guarantee. God is able (*dunato*), but he is free to choose whom, how, when, and to what degree he will bless. There is a sense in which every Christian has received the grace of God in Christ (Rom. 5:15), but here Paul thought of special mercy that comes to some and not to others. When God so chooses to bless, the result will be that in all things at all times believers will receive all that they need, and will abound in every good work.

## 2. Principles of Generous Living (2 Cor. 9:6-9)

In this passage, Paul taught how Christian giving is to be done. Believers are to give generously and cheerfully. Giving will be neither generous nor cheerful if givers are anxious about meeting their own needs. Christians may have reasoned that the more they gave, the less they would have, and the more likely they would become dependent on the giving of others.

We should remember that there is always a return on investment when we give. There is a spiritual return on the investments you make in the kingdom of God. The first principle that we should consider has to do with timing on the returns.

There may be times when Christians invest and don't see a return for months or years. There may be times when they give and never really see a direct return. Should Christians grow frustrated or weary when this happens? No, because their giving isn't motivated by return. They give because they have received. They give because they are commanded to give. They give because they love Jesus and desire to walk in His ways.

 When we talk about a return on investment in Kingdom giving, do we mean dollars and cents? What is dangerous about making the basis of our investment returned money?


In verse 8, Paul wrote "always having everything you need." Paul didn't preach a prosperity gospel. He wasn't promoting a "get rich" strategy. Paul expressed to the Corinthians that God would take care of them by providing for their needs. He did not mean God would make them financially rich people. The return on investment would come in many forms, some tangible and some intangible.

When one's giving is an expression of God's grace, God will provide more to the giver, who then will be able to give even more. God sees far more clearly than we do that all worldly wealth is temporary. God has given us excess so that we will live generously and take care of others. He expects His people to invest their financial resources in ways that will endure for eternity. Generous giving is not to be done haphazardly, but purposefully.

 Do you think a Christian's attitude and posture matter when they give sacrificially and invest in Kingdom work?


Paul said that those who give should do so cheerfully. The fact of the matter is that what Christians do with their hands is inextricably related to what is going on in their hearts. If they are sinning in their hearts, then the fruit of their hands gets spoiled. Similarly, if a Christian has good intentions but doesn't follow through, then they are in opposition to their heavenly Father.

God has been generous with Christians giving them both an example and a motivation to do likewise. Christians are commanded to be generous, and when they are generous, they also receive a return on the investment. But it doesn't stop there. God blesses them so that they can be generous again. It's a cycle of generosity.

 Application: Do those close to you consider you to be a generous person? Is generosity reflected in both your heart and your hands? What needs to change?

### **3. Rewards of Generous Living (2 Cor. 9:10-14)**

We've seen several principles of generosity found in the New Testament. Now, let's think about spiritual rewards for generous living. The first benefit of being generous is spiritual growth.

 What is the connection between generosity and spiritual growth? How have you experienced this?

Giving sacrificially to others and to kingdom work is a safeguard for those who are in Christ. Paul said that giving would increase the harvest of the believers' righteousness. In other words, living generous was going to help the Corinthians be more like Jesus. Giving away material resources forces Christians to remember that their true treasure isn't found here on earth. It forces them to rely more upon God and to recognize idols in their lives. All of this contributes to their sanctification.





According to verse 12, how else does generosity result in spiritual growth? How did Paul describe their expression of gratitude? What characterized their thanksgiving?

Paul said that as others witnessed and experienced the generosity of the Corinthians it would lead them to give thanks to God. Think about it: When a person experiences the work of God's grace in daily life through someone else, the response is not to set up shrines and altars to worship that person. The response is to worship, love, enjoy, and trust God even more because of His provision through another person. So, generosity causes spiritual growth in the giver, the receiver, and those Christians who are witnesses of what the giver does.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that God was capable of meeting their needs as they followed His leadership in meeting the needs of others. One obvious way the Lord provides for His people is through one another. When God's people happily render the service of meeting one another's needs, the result is thanksgiving to God. Those receiving gifts from other believers recognize His hand at work and thank Him.

When followers of Jesus live generously, joy can't be squashed. You might as well try to keep the tide from coming in as you try to hold back the joy that is produced by generous living. This joy is produced in the giver, receiver, and witness alike. Why? Because everything about biblical generosity places Christians squarely in the middle of God's will. Plus, generosity is a direct parallel of the grace of God that Christians see at the cross, as well as the innumerable daily blessings from Him that they experience. Generosity is grace. And grace is the currency of the Kingdom.

We certainly don't give in order to make people like us. If that's our goal, then we've short-circuited generosity. That is not true generosity but manipulation. However, when we give to others out of faith and obedience to our heavenly Father, then the bonds we have with the receiver will be deepened and strengthened. Generosity results in a greater sense of community, interdependence, and family.



Application: What motivates you to generosity? How is generosity connected to the gospel?

## Conclusion

Christians are a generous people because they worship and follow a generous God. John 3:16 says, “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” The ultimate act of generosity was God the Father giving the Son to suffer and die for the rescue of many sinners.

Those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb live according to a new law and from a new posture. Christians aren’t concerned with self-preservation, but self-sacrifice in service and worship of their King. This means that they are a generous people. They are willing to give of what they have for the good of those around them.

- ❓ Are you a generous person? What are some specific ways you have been generous this past week? What were some missed opportunities of generosity?
- ❓ Who do you find yourself being more generous toward? Why? Is there anyone to whom it is hard to be generous? How might you seek to grow in this area?
- ❓ What does generosity have to do with seeking to have gospel conversations? Should you be generous also toward non-believers? Why or why not?

## Prayer of Response

*Pray that as you and your fellow church members apply the truths of the gospel to your lives you all would become a giving, self-sacrificial people. Pray that your generosity would be instructed and guided by the Scriptures.*

## Additional Resources

- *A Disruptive Generosity* by Mac Pier
- *The Treasure Principle* by Randy Alcorn
- *Kingdom Stewardship* by Tony Evans

## For Next Week

### Session Title

- The Gospel and Politics

### Main Passages

- 1 Timothy 2:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14,17

### Session Outline

1. Oriented Toward the Kingdom (1 Tim. 2:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-17)
2. The King of the Kingdom (1 Tim. 2:3-4)
3. The Key to the Kingdom (1 Tim. 2:5-7)

### Memorize

*<sup>6</sup> The point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver.*

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

### Daily Readings

- Monday - 2 Corinthians 8:1-9
- Tuesday - 2 Corinthians 9:6-8
- Wednesday - 2 Corinthians 9:10-15
- Thursday - 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- Friday - Acts 20:32-35
- Saturday - 1 Chronicles 29:1-19

# Historical Context of 2 Corinthians

## Purpose

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians mainly to express his joy that the majority had been restored to him, to ask for an offering on behalf of the poor saints in Jerusalem, and to defend his ministry as an apostle to the minority of unrepentant Corinthian believers. His desire was to encourage the majority and to lead the minority to change its mind about the validity of his apostolic ministry.

## Author

All biblical scholars agree that Paul wrote this letter (1:1; 10:1). It contains more personal information about him than any other letter, and its Greek style is especially like that of Romans and 1 Corinthians. Proposed chronologies of Paul's life and ministry include a number of variations. Yet for 2 Corinthians, the consensus is that the letter was written about AD 56 (from Ephesus during Paul's third missionary journey).

## Setting

Second Corinthians was the third letter of Paul to the Corinthian church. The letter expressed his relief that many repented in response to his second (lost) letter but still pleading with an unrepentant minority. He promised to come to Corinth a third time (12:14; 13:1). This was fulfilled when Paul stayed in Corinth while on his way to Jerusalem with the financial collection from many churches (Ac 20:2-3).

## Special Features

Of all Paul's letters, none is more personally revealing of his heart than 2 Corinthians. At the same time, it is also the most defensive of any New Testament letter. In it Paul mounts a strong argument ("apology" in the positive sense) for his authority and ministry. A number of important doctrines are taught in the epistle, yet its greatest value may be that it reveals the heart and spirit of one of the most effective ministers of all time. We are thus shown that genuine ministry—although it may have to be guarded from attack—is commissioned by Christ and empowered by the Spirit.

## Extended Commentary

### Philippians 4:15-20

4:15. The early days of the gospel refers to Paul's leaving Philippi to continue witnessing in Europe. Shared is, again, "fellowship" (v. 14; 1:5). Others had a one-way relationship, receiving but not giving. "You alone" reveals one reason why Paul loved the Philippian church. They did what others did not.

4:16. Paul entered Thessalonica after leaving Philippi, and the Philippian believers' gifts to him began immediately and continued consistently (several times).

4:17. With contentment (v. 11) and adaptability (v. 12), Paul did not seek the gift. That would abuse his converts and compromise servanthood. With a higher, spiritual motivation, Paul sought the profit that is increasing to your account. Using financial terms, Paul declared this "profit" accrued from an action. "Increasing" is the interest it would bear to the account of the Philippian believers. Giving, a physical and material act, is a spiritual transaction.

4:18. Continuing financial language, Paul had received everything in full. Any responsibility to him was paid. What Epaphroditus embodied was an abundance. Their material support was a fragrant offering and an acceptable sacrifice because it met Paul's needs and was pleasing to God (cp. Rm 12:1-2). Giving always benefits those who give more than those who receive.

4:19-20. God bountifully blesses those who give with glorious provision in accord with his glory and for his purposes. Paul's doxology is based on the ultimate purpose of life to bring glory to God now and forever.<sup>2</sup>

### 2 Corinthians 9:6-14

9:6 The words sparingly . . . sparingly . . . generously . . . generously state a principle that is proverbially true, based on common agricultural experience. Here it is applied to financial matters, but see Lk 6:38; Gl 6:7-9.

9:7 Christian stewardship, like other good works, flows ideally from a heart of love for God and others rather than from a sense of duty (Mt 22:37-40).

9:8 A form of the Greek word for "all" is used in four phrases here, translated as every grace... every way . . . everything you need, and every good work. A closely related word is translated always.

9:9 This quotation of Ps 112:9 is taken from a song about those who fear the Lord by living lives of righteous obedience to him, extolling them to give to the poor.

9:10-11 These verses return to the agricultural metaphor of v. 6, emphasizing God's sovereignty in providing for the material needs of believers (seed) as well as for their spiritual needs (righteousness).

9:12-13 The impact of the Corinthians' gift to the poor believers in Jerusalem would go far beyond Jerusalem. Other congregations would learn about it and praise God for the generosity of the Corinthians. Christian stewardship is one important way to acknowledge the truth of Christ's gospel before others. For other instances of Paul's use of "confess" or confession, see Rm 10:9-10; 1Tm 6:12-13.

9:14 An added incentive for giving is that other believers will pray for those who give generously, because generous giving is evidence of the grace of God already at work in such people.<sup>3</sup>

## References

1. MacMillan, Amanda. "Happiness: Being Generous Makes You Feel Better." *Time*. July 14, 2017. Accessed July 30, 2020. <https://time.com/4857777/generosity-happiness-brain/>.
2. *CSB Study Bible: Christian Standard Bible*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017.
3. *Ibid.*

## Author Bio

### Mac Pier (A Disruptive Generosity)

Mac Pier is the founder and CEO of The New York City Leadership Center and was instrumental in founding the inaugural Movement Day conference. Pier also serves the Lausanne Movement as the City Catalyst. A resident of New York City since 1984, Mac lives in a diverse neighborhood with residents from more than 100 ethnic groups and attends church with people who speak 60 different languages. He is the author of *A Disruptive Gospel*, *Spiritual Leadership in the Global City*, and *Consequential Leadership*; coauthor of *The Power of a City at Prayer*; and a contributor to *Signs of Hope in the City*.

### Randy Alcorn (The Treasure Principle)

Randy Alcorn is the founder and director of Eternal Perspective Ministries, a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching biblical truth and drawing attention to the needy and how to help them. Alcorn is the author of over 40 books, including *Heaven; Money, Possessions and Eternity*; *Pro-Life Answers to Pro-Choice Arguments*; and *The Treasure Principle*. His novels include *Deadline*; *Dominion*; *Deception*; and *Safely Home*. Alcorn resides in Oregon with his wife, Nanci.

### Tony Evans (Kingdom Stewardship)

Dr. Tony Evans is the founder and senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, founder and president of The Urban Alternative, former chaplain of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys, and present chaplain of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks. His radio broadcast, *The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans*, can be heard on over 1,200 US radio outlets daily and in more than 130 countries. Dr. Evans launched the Tony Evans Training Center in 2017, an online learning platform providing quality seminary-style courses for a fraction of the cost to any person in any place. The goal is to increase Bible literacy not only in lay people but also in those Christian leaders who cannot afford nor find the time for formal ongoing education. For more information, visit: <http://www.TonyEvans.org>.