

GIFTS & GIVING

A SPECIAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON FOR DECEMBER



Introduction

The New Testament has much to say about gifts. Salvation is a gift (Romans 6:23), the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a gift (Acts 2:38), and each Christian is empowered for service with a spiritual gift (1st Peter 4:10). Jesus Himself is a gift (John 3:16). So God is an expert giver and knows a lot about giving. We would do well to learn from Him! One place we learn about God's guidance for giving is the offering from the Gentile churches for the support of the Jewish mother church in Jerusalem. These believers were going through a hard time and Paul took on the project of raising money to aid them. The offering served a second purpose of unifying Jewish and Gentile believers.

Main Point

Christian giving doesn't happen by accident or on a whim. It is the result of planning and self-discipline.

Promotional Objective

To remind church members of the importance of supporting the general church budget.



Bible Passages

1st Corinthians 16:1-4 and 2nd Corinthians 9:1-15

Outline at a Glance

1. Giving should be systematic I Cor. 16:1-2
2. Giving should be proportional I Cor. 16:1-2
3. Gifts should be handled with accountability..... I Cor. 16:3-4
4. Giving should be done in a spirit of generosity II Cor. 9:1-7
5. God empowers giving supernaturally II Cor. 9:8-14
6. All giving is done reciprocally..... II Cor. 9:15

THE LESSON

1. Giving should be Systematic I Cor. 16:1-2

"Now about the collection for the saints: you should do the same as I instructed the Galatian churches. On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside" I Cor. 16:1-2 (HCSB)

First day of the week— "already kept sacred by Christians as the day of the Lord's resurrection, the beginning day both of the physical and of the new spiritual creations: it gradually superseded the Jewish sabbath on the seventh day" — Jamieson, Fausset and Brown (hereafter abbreviated JFB)

Each one of you— "even those in limited circumstances." — JFB The best way to have a good offering is for everyone to give something. Also, giving is not simply about the amount of money raised, it is about the joy of participation, of having a part, even if small.

Set something aside— "Lay by him in store. By himself, in his home. Treasuring it. Have the habit of doing it, imperative (i.e. a command to obey). - Robertson's Word Pictures (hereafter RWP)

Here is a systematic way of giving; simple, but consistent.

Introductory Discussion Question

Some people use envelopes and some people use jars. What is the most unusual budgeting system you have seen personally?

Agree or disagree—why or why not? ...Everyone has a budgeting system. (Budget, Spend until we run out of money and credit, or something in between.)

2. Giving should be proportional

II Cor. 16:2

“On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and save to the extent that he prospers” I Cor. 16:2

To the extent that he prospers — “in keeping with his income” (NIV). As it was put during the *Challenge to Build* campaign, “Not equal gifts, equal sacrifice.”

“Increasing his alms as God increases his substance. According to this lowest rule of Christian prudence, if a man when he has or gains one pound give a tenth to God, when he has or gains an hundred he will give the tenth of this also. And yet I show unto you a more excellent way. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Stint yourself to no proportion at all. But lend to God all you can.”

— John Wesley

3. Gifts should be handled with accountability

II Cor. 16:3-4

“And when I arrive, I will send those whom you recommend by letter to carry your gracious gift to Jerusalem. If it is also suitable for me to go, they will travel with me” I Cor. 16:3-4

With me— “that is, those brethren whom the church shall approve and send; for he would not go alone, nor propose it, to remove all suspicion of converting any money to his own use.” — John Gill

Discussion Question

Paul asked for men to escort him to Jerusalem to deliver the money. This way, the Christians in Corinth would know that the money actually got to the people to whom they were sending it. List ways our church follows this principle of accountability.

4. Giving should be done in a spirit of generosity

II Cor. 9:1-7

“Therefore I considered it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance the generous gift you promised, so that it will be ready as a gift and not an extortion. Remember this: the person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not out of regret or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.” II Cor. 9:5-7

Not an extortion— “That is, that the collection being ready made, largely and liberally, it might appear to be a free generous action, and show what a noble bountiful disposition they were of; and not performed as covetous men usually do what they do, sparingly, tenaciously, keeping their money as long as they can, being loath to part with it.” — John Gill

The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously — “The reaping shall correspond to the proportions and spirit of the sowing” — Bengal quoted in RWP

“The sower casts and scatters his seed with an open hand; was he to gripe it in his fist, or only let go a grain of corn or wheat here and there, he would have but a poor harvest; so the cheerful giver opens his hand wide, and bountifully supplies the wants of the needy... the generous benefactor does what he does in as private a manner as may be; and though for a time his good deeds may seem to be attended with little prospect of reward, yet in the end they certainly shall; for as a man sows, so shall he reap: if he sows, that is, gives nothing, he shall reap nothing; if he sows but little, he shall reap little; and if he sows much, he shall reap much” — John Gill

Cheerful giver— “Our word ‘hilarious’ comes from [the Greek word for cheerful]” — RWP

Discussion Question

In what ways do we reap when we give generously. Specifically, what are some of the ways in which we reap a harvest when we sow the seed of generosity?

5. God empowers giving supernaturally

II Cor. 9:8-14

“And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work. As it is written: **He has scattered; He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.** Now the One who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness, as you are enriched in every way for all generosity, which produces thanksgiving to God through us. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many acts of thanksgiving to God.” II Corinthians 9:8-12 (HCSB)

God is able to make every grace overflow to you — Not only are we saved by grace, and sustained through hard times by grace, we also give by grace.

Always having everything you need— “always having all sufficiency in all things” (KJV).

So that— “‘in order that.’ God’s gifts are bestowed on us, not that we may have them to ourselves, but that we may the more “abound in good works” to others. — JFB

You may excel in every good work— “God gives us everything, that we may do good therewith, and so receive more blessings.” — Wesley

As it is written— Quoting Psalm 112:9

Now the One who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed— “What do you have that you didn’t receive?” (I Corinthians 4:7)

Discussion Question

Was there a time in your family when you began to tithe? Did you wonder how you would ever be able to do it? Did you feel the hand of God intervening to make it happen? What was the experience like?

6. All giving is done reciprocally

II Cor. 9:15

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift” — II Cor. 9:15 (HCSB)

Indescribable gift — “wonder beyond description” Moulton and Milligan’s *Vocabulary* quoted in RWP “The gift of His own Son, which includes all other inferior gifts (II Cor. 8:9 Rom. 8:32). If we have received from God ‘His unspeakable gift,’ what great thing is it, if we give a few perishing gifts for His sake?” — JFB

Ultimately, we do not contribute anything to God and His Kingdom with our gifts; we are merely reciprocating His greater grace toward us.

Teaching Goals

1. To encourage members to develop a plan for giving if they do not yet have one.
2. To help pupils grow in giving as a discipline.
3. To encourage class members to rely on God’s grace to lead and empower them in giving.
4. To see the church budget as the foundation of church support, as the general budget supports ministry and missions, takes care of utilities and salaries, and takes care of business so that special offerings such as the building fund, etc. can happen. Without ministry, we wouldn’t need a building!

Budget Facts in Brief

- Our Annual Budget for Next Year: \$ _____
- Average weekly amount needed: \$ _____
(Remember, receipts in the early Sundays of the month will be progressively higher than the later Sundays)

