

# Why do we give

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Date: 01 February 2026

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[ 0 : 00 ] The church in Jerusalem. They had quite a lot of needs.! One of them being that the church in Jerusalem fell on hard times when a famine hit the area.!

And in the verses from chapter 9, verse 6, we've got three points for us to consider. Why do we give? We give because of wisdom.

We give because of wisdom. Have a look there at verse 6. Remember this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

This is wisdom. A wise saying. And it comes from farming. It's about sowing and reaping.

And there's sort of two attitudes here, sort of two ways to give laid out in this verse. And to help us to understand it, I've got two farmers for us to meet.

[ 1 : 25 ] The first one is farmer sparing. That's how the verse starts. Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly. A farmer sparing, they have a lot of seed, and it can be planted in the ground to produce crops.

But actually, farmer sparing decides that's quite risky. Farming's a risky business in general, isn't it? All my knowledge, by the way, about farming comes from Jeremy Clarkson's farm on Amazon Prime. Anyway, my knowledge I've gained from there is that the weather affects farming big time. Weather's unpredictable, especially in this country, isn't it? You could have years where there's lots of rain and winds, and then the crops will struggle.

You could have years where there's far too much warm sunshine, and crops will struggle. Lots of risk are involved, and farmer sparing knows that.

[ 2 : 29 ] And he has all this seed, and it's stored in his barn, and he thinks, well, maybe I should keep some of this seed away in case the first lot of planting goes wrong.

And then what if there's a real emergency, and I can't get any more seeds, so I'll save some more, and I'll just keep saving seed. And actually, by the end of it, he sows very little. And the result of that, Paul says, is that he will not reap a big harvest.

Because you just don't know what the weather's going to do. You don't know what emergency might arise. So that's farmer sparing. There's also farmer generous.

Whoever sows generously, Paul says, will reap generously. Lastly, this farmer has lots of seeds. Lots of seeds stored in his barn.

But he knows if it stays in the barn, then there's no situation where he's going to have a big harvest. And if you have a big harvest, you're going to make lots of money, and you're going to provide for yourself and your family.

[ 3 : 42 ] So he thinks, well, it's not going to do any growing in the barn. I'm just going to plant it. So say he plants 90% of his store of seed. He does that, and he has a much higher chance than farmer sparing of reaping a great harvest.

And this is a way to describe two ways we can think about our money. We can think in a farmer sparing way about the money in our bank.

Like farmer sparing, we'll work out what do we actually need to spend. Well, we need to have money for bills.

We need money to pay for shopping. We need this amount for Netflix, because that's a vital part of life now, isn't it? Then I need some for a rainy day.

And then I need more in case the car goes wrong. I need a holiday fund. I need money in the savings account. And whilst I'm at it, I'll best put some more away in case the boiler goes wrong.

[ 4 : 51 ] And then what if some emergency I haven't even thought about happens? I'll best save some more. And by the time we've done all that, we've got very little, if nothing, left to give away.

That's one way we can view our money. The other way can be a bit more like farmer generous. We see that money is being stored away in the bank.

And in the bank, it's not actually doing a lot, is it? Yes, we do need to make sure we've got money to pay our bills. Yes, we do need to make sure we buy the shopping.

Yes, we may feel we need to spend money on Netflix and save some away. There is wisdom in that. But if we saved it all, well, where's the joy of blessing others with it?

Where's the joy of blessing those less well-off than us? Where's the joy of giving to really good charity work that's happening to help those that perhaps will never meet but really need help?

[ 5 : 59 ] And Paul highlights this because particularly important for us as Christians, when we remember that the Lord gives us everything that we have.

The Bible makes clear that everything in the world belongs to God, including the money that he generously gives to us. And when we consider that he has generously given his son for us, that in him and his poverty, laying aside the riches of heaven, we are made to be the richest people in the world with riches that really count not just for this life but for eternity.

And so being generous, therefore, is surely a good godly thing to do. So that's why Paul presents this wisdom to these Christians.

That's the first point. The second point is, why do we give? Because we're free. Have a look at verse 7. 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.

It's good to be generous. That's the principle that Paul's laid out in verse 6. It's good to be generous. It's good to give to the Lord. But remember, God doesn't actually need anything from us, does he?

[ 7 : 31 ] And so there's great freedom in what we give and how we give. Now, this might frustrate some of us.

Some of us might think, well, hang on. Doesn't the Bible say we should give 10% of our money away? That's a great guideline.

And it comes from some laws in the Old Testament about what the people had, recognizing it was from God and giving to God in a sacrificial way.

But they were never limited to 10%. In fact, there were other sacrifices that they should make. And there was even a free will offering. So it was 10% and more.

So by no means were God's people limited to that 10% tithing. I think it can act as a helpful starter for us when we're thinking about giving.

[ 8 : 34 ] But we don't have to be restricted to that. I remember being challenged on my giving as a Christian about five years ago.

Challenged that I wasn't really regularly giving to the Lord's work. And then I looked at what 10% was. And I was a bit shocked to see how much it really was.

That actually hurt. But that's where it began. And it was good to build on that. Whatever way we think, whether we think, yes, I must give 10% or I must just give generously.

This is what verse 7 says. Let me read it to you again. We're free in this. Each of you should give what you have decided to give in your heart to God.

Verse 7 doesn't say, Do not give because you have to.

[ 9 : 43 ] Do not give because someone is telling you to. Don't give because someone says you must give X amount or God tells you to give.

Verse 7 doesn't say that. We shouldn't give because we feel like we're under compulsion to give. If we do, we're on dodgy ground.

It was sad to read in the news this headline and article a few weeks ago. I gave the last 46p I had. Young people tell how they felt pressure to donate to a church.

A quote from the article about what one of the former members of the church said. They said, The day before my baptism, they asked me how much money I was making and I told them.

We picked a price, an amount of money, and they said I should be giving that to the church weekly. But the church didn't know that she was in an overdraft. That's not honoring to the Lord.

[ 10 : 47 ] Another person had been asked to send the church their bank statements, and then the church would work out what they should give. That's not right.

That's controlling. The Bible says we are free to give what we feel is right before the Lord. None of us should give because we feel under compulsion.

Nor should we give because we're reluctant. Sort of give because we think, If I don't give some money to the Lord, the Lord's going to be angry with me.

No, God's far bigger than that. He's not dependent on the money you give. Don't give reluctantly. What does the verse say God loves? He loves a cheerful giver.

The Lord loves a cheerful giver. That word for cheerful, my understanding is, comes from the word hilarious.

[12:02] A word that could be translated hilarious. In other words, give because you are just very happy to. Give because you can give with a smile on your face, thinking, God's given me this and I want to bless others with it.

Don't give because you are reluctant to or under compulsion to. The Lord doesn't love that, actually. And so, I think this verse is calling us to do some very careful heart work.

To search our hearts and think, What am I happy to give to the Lord and his people and his work? We've read a really wonderful example of giving in this section of 2 Corinthians.

It's recorded to us in chapter 8. It's just good to have this in mind. Chapter 8, verse 1. And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace God has given the Macedonian churches.

So, he draws attention to how the Macedonian churches were giving to the church in Jerusalem. Verse 2.

[13:22] In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. They heard about the needs in the church in Jerusalem.

And they saw it as a real opportunity for them to give. Even though they were themselves struggling, they wanted to be generous.

And Paul says this. They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations.

They gave themselves, first of all, to the Lord. And then by the will of God also to us. They had seen just how wonderfully generous the Lord Jesus had been.

And they wanted to be generous to you. But don't limit the scope of giving to money. What did we read in verse 5?

[14:22] They gave themselves, first of all, to the Lord. It's not just about the money that they had in their bank to give. It was that they wanted to say, firstly to the Lord, Lord, my whole life is yours.

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to you. Because God gives us far more than money in the bank. God is far more generous to us than just some money.

He gives us our whole lives, our breath. He gives us grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives us forgiveness in him. He gives us salvation in him.

He gives us eternal life in him. And so we want to give our all back to him.

Not because we have to, but because we are willing to. As we see what costs our salvation. In Jesus, we are so free.

[15:30] We don't have to follow laws to save ourselves. We don't have to follow the rule of 10%. But surely love, so amazing, so divine, devout man's our whole lives given to him.

But there's more. We are free to give. We give because of the principle of wisdom, generosity.

We also give because of our God. The motivation that Paul gives in the verses following isn't give because God says so.

It could be. Who were we to argue with the commands of the Lord? But it's far deeper and far greater than that. Paul says, remember your doctrine of God. Verse 8, God is able to bless you abundantly so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

God is abundantly generous, Paul says. He's not a mean God who withholds his generosity from his people.

[16:51] He is abundantly generous. And so part of thinking about giving to him is saying, do I believe that God is good?

Do I believe that God is an abundant giver? And thinking about that reminds me of some verses in Luke's gospel, Luke chapter 11.

Luke chapter 11, verse 11 to 13. Which says this, which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?

Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

It's an amusing situation. You can't really imagine a son asking for an egg and the dad giving a scorpion. I'm bored about when it comes to God and what kind of a giving Father he is.

[ 18 : 15 ] Well, he's not mean. He's generous. He does give good gifts to his children. He knows how to do it. And one of the wonderful gifts he gives to us is his Holy Spirit.

He gives us himself living within us. Isn't God a very good giving God? And in the Lord Jesus, as we've mentioned already, how much he has given to us.

We owe a whole stack of debt to God, don't we, because of our sin. But in the Lord Jesus, he has paid for that sin in full.

So that in him, we don't find ourselves spiritually bankrupt anymore before the Lord, but we find ourselves rich in Christ. God is a wonderful, abundant giver.

God is a great giver. But we do just need to be careful here as we say that. Because some have used that sort of idea of God being a great giver and talked about giving money in a way that is very unhelpful.

[ 19 : 30 ] Many of us will have heard of the prosperity gospel. Give X amount to God and God will bless you with even more money in your bank account.

And even more than that, you'll be free from all sorts of troubles, all sorts of strange things that they say.

That's not why we give. We don't give because we believe God is then going to give us a million pounds in our bank account. We don't give because then we believe God will free us from sickness. The Lord Jesus says, doesn't he, what good would it be if we gained the whole world and yet forfeited our soul? What God gives according to verse 8 is this.

That in him, at all times, we'll have all that we need. And you will abound in every good work.

[ 20 : 34 ] He will supply you with your every need. Not necessarily your every want. Maybe you do want a million pounds in the bank account. And giving to God, well, that's not how you're going to get it.

And that's not actually what we need, is it? In fact, what we need is this. Verse 10. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

He will supply you with a harvest of righteousness, Paul says. That's not money in your bank account, is it?

That's like a currency that will last forever. Far better than anything money can buy us.

Righteousness. Righteousness. Righteousness is ours when we come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. It's credited to our account. And then it continues to be worked in us as God is making us more like the Lord Jesus.

[ 21 : 44 ] And one of the ways that we become more like the Lord Jesus is showing generosity. Being generous as he's been generous to us. Amen.

So what a wonderful thing to give and to know that he provides for us in that way. And in the giving, there's a wonderful enriching for us.

Verse 11. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion. And through your generosity, it will result in thanksgiving to God. As we're generous in giving to the church and Christian work elsewhere, there's a wonderful enriching for us, isn't there?

A wonderful encouragement to us. It's a sort of an addictive thing. Giving money and saying it's blessing others. And so we'll want to continue to give and be blessed and be encouraged as we see that that money is making a difference in God's kingdom.

One writer said this. Your money can make you an overseas missionary without ever leaving your hometown.

[ 23 : 11 ] It can make you an evangelist without ever mounting a platform. A broadcaster without ever entering a broadcast studio. A Bible teacher without ever writing a book.

And we could add to that. You can be a youth worker without ever doing youth work. You can be a Bible translator without ever knowing another language. You can be a church planter without ever planting a church.

That's the sort of difference our money can make in God's economy. And so much more. Because that's the sort of impact God can do with the things that we give to him.

And it might be that God would also call us alongside that to actively go and do some of those things.

But for most of us, we stay here in the locality that God has called us to live in. And we seek to be witnesses in our homes and neighborhoods and workplaces.

[ 24 : 11 ] And we seek to give to the Lord of what we can to his local church. And we think, well, how can I bless the wider church in those ways? And as David said earlier, we also think it's right as a whole local church to give money away together out of what the Lord's provided for this church for work around the world.

Otherwise, our giving would only go to a very small part of the world, wouldn't it? And so it's amazing to think that it can make a difference to people in Turkey.

It can make a difference to people in London and other places in the world. Cambodia. And isn't it amazing to think that through our giving, one day we may stand in the new creation alongside other believers who are there in part because of the money that we have given away to make it possible for them to hear the gospel.

And when that happens, I don't think we'd regret cancelling our Netflix subscription in order to have given that money away, not in terms of eternity. It might hurt a little here, but the harvest it reaps will be great.

And maybe you think that as you give, as you show generosity, the thanks should go to yourself because you're the one who gives.

[ 25 : 45 ] But look at where Paul ends in verse 15. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift. Paul ends the passage in that way because he needs to remind us that the ultimate giver is God.

And the thanks will go to the giver and the giver really isn't us, it's the Lord. And all the glory should go to him for his indescribable gift.

The indescribable gift of his son laying down his life for us. The indescribable gift of giving us that gift of righteousness, that eternal currency that means we can stand before our holy gods.

God is really not far from sparing, is he? He's an incredible generous God who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all.

And as we give, we become more like his son, who has shown wonderful generosity to us. So the call is let's be generous with what he has given to us.

[ 27 : 03 ] And we can do that. I think we can probably do that no matter what age we are. Those who are younger than I am, don't do what I did when I was growing up and think, oh, I've got money, I've got pocket money, I've got it all to myself.

What can I spend it on? What can I save? But actually, even now, if you're following the Lord, now's the time to start this. So I don't know what the going rate for pocket money is nowadays.

I used to get about a pound a week. I think it went up a bit as I got a bit older. Four pounds a month. If I gave a pound away of that pocket money, that would be 25% of my income given to the Lord's work.

That's a good place to start, isn't it? And then as we're older, and if the Lord blesses us with more money than four pounds a month, we can see, how can I be generous with that and keep that going through the rest of our life because our God is so generous to us.

And it strikes me for all of us, I mentioned Netflix. There's all sorts of subscriptions we can have in life as well. Not just Netflix, Disney+, Spotify for music.

[ 28 : 18 ] You can even get subscriptions to coffee and tea. I once was even tempted by a sock subscription. So many things require a subscription nowadays, don't they?

We're so used to money going out to things that perhaps really we don't need. And perhaps we just have too many. Hard to keep track. Hard to even remember what subscriptions we have.

But perhaps this morning the Lord is helping us to see we need to make sure we have a subscription to his kingdom.

Not that we need one. We don't need one. There's no subscription fee to get in. And there's no subscription fee to get into heaven other than the Lord Jesus Christ has laid down his life for us.

But what a wonderful thing it is to give to him. To say God's kingdom is worthy of some money. Because it may result in the blessing of souls being harvested for his kingdom.

[ 29 : 28 ] So let's be generous. Just as God has been generous to us. We're going to pray. And then I think rather than singing our next song, we'll move straight to communion.

If someone can let the Sunday Club know, that would be great. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for the Lord Jesus Christ who has laid down his life for us on the cross.

Thank you for your incredible, rich generosity to us. Shown in him. And Father, we pray that you would help us to be generous with what you have given to us.

Help us to be generous in giving it back to you and your gospel work. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me read to you that verse that we started the sermon with.

For you. For you.