

participating in that good work. Your giving makes it possible. Giving is a good work that will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Now, if God gives you the money to support good works, who gets the credit? Who gets the glory? I think you can answer these questions. So, when you see a need, pray for the money, and if God provides, give it all. God supplies the seed for sowing (2 Cor. 9:10–11). Most people think that, when they see a verse like this, God will increase their income so they'll have more to give. There will be more for Him and more for me! But that's not what the verse is saying. If He gives you the exact amount or more than enough, you have to give it all. It's not a get-rich-quick scheme. That's being double-minded—having ulterior motives.

**9. Don't trumpet your giving.** Give silently—anonously. Don't tell anyone about it. Don't publicize it. "When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing; that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you" (Matt. 6:2–4). You want God to be glorified when you give. Trumpeting glorifies yourself. How can you give without your left hand knowing what your right hand is doing? You can't. It's impossible. The same mind controls both hands. So, if you give with your right hand, your left will know. And if you give with your left hand, your right will know. This is an example of hyperbole—intended exaggeration. If you could, do it. But since you can't, do the next best thing—don't let anyone know that you gave.

**10. Give generously without ulterior motives.** Let's take a close look at Romans 12:8. The KJV has "he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity." Now what does that mean? It doesn't make much sense. How do you give "with simplicity?" If I were to call the ushers forward to pass the plate again and asked you to give "with simplicity," what would you do? The phrase "with simplicity" is obviously important; it explains how God wants you to give if you have the gift of giving. But you can read it all day and still not be sure you're giving as the Holy Spirit has instructed. Let's see if a modern translation helps. The NKJV reads "he who gives, with liberality." The NASB supplies an ellipsis: "he who gives, *let him give* with liberality." That makes a lot more sense. Give generously! Pull out all the

stops! If God has given you the gift of giving, give a bunch. But, unfortunately, this is only half of the story. In Greek *haplotes* means more than 'generosity' or 'liberality.' It connotes generosity with single-minded simplicity, an undivided heart, no hidden motives. The opposite is to be double-minded, to have ulterior motives in giving. Giving, then, must be done with a single motive—with singleness of mind. The temptation is to have a second motive. For example, you may give money to help put a roof on your church (first motive) and at the same time try to influence or control the board of deacons. In other words, you also give money to buy power (second motive). That's giving generously, but with ulterior motives. Give like God gives, generously without hidden motives: "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously (*haplos*) and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

**11. Decide beforehand how much you're going to give.** "Let each one *do* just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

**12. Sow and reap bountifully.** "He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6). This is a promise of blessing. Remember what Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Those who have the gift of giving—and use it—will be happy people. Why? Because (1) you're making someone else happy, (2) you can't give without getting something in return—appreciation, thanks, a gift, friendship, loyalty, love, admiration, and glory (a good Christian reputation), (3) you will always reap much more than you sow, and (4) God will reward you with treasure in heaven.

In concluding this study, it's important to remember that these points, these principles of giving, all govern the spiritual gift of giving.



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# GIVING



## and the Gift of Giving



**1. The gift of giving is a supernatural ability given by God to help provide the financial needs of local churches and the Church Universal.** Like all spiritual gifts, it was given to help one another (1 Cor. 12:7). A small number of believers with this gift often carry the financial burden of a church. The gift of giving is mentioned only once in the New Testament—in Romans 12:8. An ellipsis must be supplied: "he who gives, *let him give* with liberality." It's important to note at the outset that all of the principles of giving in the New Testament apply to Christians who have the gift of giving. Let's take a look at these principles in the points that follow.

**2. Giving will make you happy.** Jesus promised this when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Giving is fantastic. You can't give without making someone happy and you can't give without making yourself happy. That's win-win. Happiness comes from giving! This is a beatitude. It's a simple promise. *He who gives will be happier than he who receives. Or there's more*

*happiness in giving than in receiving.* You'll be happier giving presents than receiving them. But be careful. The verse does in fact admit you'll be happy receiving things. There's simply more happiness in giving. There's happiness in giving and receiving!

**3. Give voluntarily.** Paul says, "For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability *they gave* of their own accord" (2 Cor. 8:3). The adjective *authairetos* means "self-chosen. . . voluntary, i.e. undertaking the duty at one's own expense. . . by free choice. . . due to one's own choice" (LSJ). The meaning is clear in the following statement of Josephus: "they owe their destruction to folly and calamities of their own choosing (*authaireton*)" (War 6:310). The opposite of voluntary giving is giving *ex anagkes* 'of necessity' or 'under compulsion' (2 Cor. 9:7). *Anagke* means "necessity, pressure of any kind, outer or inner, brought about by the nature of things, a divine dispensation, some hoped-for advantage, custom, duty, etc." (BAGD). So don't pressure, force, or trick people into giving. We're told to give cheerfully, not grudgingly. That's the proper attitude in giving. If you give voluntarily, you'll give cheerfully and you'll be happy when you give. If you're pressured, you'll give grudgingly and be unhappy. Pressure ruins your attitude. We call this free-will giving or free-will offerings. All gifts presented to God must be voluntary. This was true of the gift offerings (*korban minchah*) of the Old Testament, and is also true of the gift offerings of the New Testament (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16)—called "spiritual sacrifices" (1 Peter 2:5).

**4. Give according to your ability.** In the churches of Macedonia Paul says "according to their ability. . . *they gave*" (2 Cor. 8:3). *Kata dunamin* means 'according to ability' as in "to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability" (Matt. 25:15). The opposite is 'beyond one's ability,' which is expressed by two prepositional phrases—*hyper dunamin* (2 Cor. 1:8) and *para dunamin* (8:3b). "This is one of the basic principles of giving: give a reasonable amount considering how much you make. God knows how much that is. You can't fool him.

**5. Give as the Lord prospers you.** This is another basic principle of giving. "On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). No figure is given. No percentage of their income is specified. It teaches the principle

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of proportionate giving.

**6. Give sacrificially.** As we have seen, the Corinthians gave *para dunamin* 'beyond their ability' (2 Cor. 8:3). Giving *according to* your ability is the norm; giving *beyond* your ability is sacrificial giving. The story of the widow's mites is an example of sacrificial giving: "many rich people were putting in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. And calling his disciples to Him, He said to them, 'Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on'" (Mark 12:43–44). She gave all she had—beyond her ability. *It's not the amount you give but the sacrifice you make.* That's how God measures giving. Sacrifice and love are closely related. If you love someone you'll sacrifice a lot to help them or to make them happy. If you don't love them, you won't make much of a sacrifice at all. God is more interested in your love than your money.

**7. Don't wait to be asked.** The Corinthians begged to be included in the offering for the saints in Jerusalem: "begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints" (2 Cor. 8:4). Those who have the gift of giving actively seek opportunities to give. Don't sit back and wait for someone to ask. Give as soon as you hear about a need.

**8. Ask God to provide something to give.** "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed" (2 Cor. 9:8). Let's take a closer look at this verse. **God is able** This clause tells what God can do, not what he will do. It's not a promise. There's no guarantee He will give you the money if you want to increase your giving. It all depends on His will. He can bless you overnight—if He wants. Why? Because He's omnipotent. Nothing is impossible for Him. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psa. 50:10). And "the LORD makes poor and rich" (1 Sam. 2:7). **to make all grace abound** "Grace" is metonymy for the money God gives you. Why is it called "grace"? Because you receive it by grace. You don't earn or deserve it. You're helpless. There's nothing you can do to acquire that much money. It's beyond your ability. God simply gives it to you. And if you get it, it's pure grace. God is honoring your attitude, your desire to give, your prayers, your faith in Him, and your obedience to His will. "All" indicates how

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much grace God is able to give. He can supply as much as He wants, as much as you'll ever need. And "make abound" means God can give you more than you asked for—more than you could ever give away. **to you,** "You" is plural and indicates the recipients of this grace—those who want to sow bountifully (cf. 2 Cor. 9:6). So you say, "OK, I'd like to sow bountifully so I can reap bountifully, but I don't have much to give. How can I do it?" Here's how. Start with what you have. If you don't have enough, give sacrificially. Then pray that God will give you even more to give. **that** introduces a purpose clause and provides the reason why God may decide to give you the money—to make all grace abound to you. **always having all sufficiency in everything,** This is loaded. God will give as *much* as you need, *whenever* you need it, for *whatever* project you wish—if it's His will. The phrase *pasan autarkeian echontes* 'having all sufficiency' means you'll have everything you want to give *without help from others.* You won't have to ask others to join you in giving. God will give the money personally to you! 'In everything' means you'll have enough to give to whatever project you wish, such as the offering for the church in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1–4). *Pantote* 'always, at all times' means you'll have money to give whenever you want. **you may have an abundance for every good deed;** This is the reason why God may make all grace abound to you. Why? So you'll have an excess to give. . . more than you need. . . more than enough. . . more than you asked for. Now, pay attention. If God gives you an excess, give it all back to Him. Don't pocket it. He gave you the excess to give, not to keep. It's not your commission. If you pray for so much to give to a certain project and God gives you more than you asked for, give it all to that project. That's how much He wants you to give. That's why He gave you the excess. Don't get greedy. In 1985, for example, Woodland Baptist Church of Indianapolis, Indiana, wanted to buy some land to build a church in Tasquillo, Mexico. For three years we tried to sell the parsonage. The best offer was \$55,000. But the week it sold three bids were made. We got full asking price—\$59,900. That was \$4,000 above the next best offer. And \$4,000 was the price of the land in Mexico. What do you think we did with the extra \$4,000? We all prayed that God would provide the money to buy the land—without outside help. I think this is the way God answered our prayers. So we bought the land. 'For every good deed' refers to a project you want to give to. Some good works need financial support. Gideons need Bibles. Vacation Bible School needs supplies. Churches need finances. When you supply the funds, you're

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