**New Year New Habits**

Pursue Generosity

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

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We are continuing our series, New Year, New Habits. Instead of making new year resolutions that almost always fail, I have encouraged us to establish new habits or renew old habits this year to bring about change in our lives. In our current series, New Year, New Habits, we are looking at some spiritual habits that God uses to change us, make us more like Jesus Christ. Today I want to look at a spiritual habit that you might not normally think is a means of grace that God uses to change us, giving. Some of you are panicking; you look like deer in the headlights. But let me start by affirming that our church, CCC is a generous church. Your giving has enabled us to add two part time staff last year, maintain our property, and fulfill the mission of making disciples here and around the world. We give over 20% away to missions and church planting (increase), we raised over $20k for the youth van, and last week you gave $2k for benevolence.

Today’s message is Pursue Generosity from 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. Let me explain the structure of the text before we read it together. Paul is encouraging the Corinthian Church to finish taking up their collection for the church in Jerusalem. He gives a command, give generously (6-7); he roots that command in a promise, God provides for generous giving (8-11), and then describes the good comes out of giving, needs are met, it causes people to thank and glorify God, and it unites the church (12-15). My big idea today is, God provides the resources to be generous.

**Give Generously (6-7)**

To complete the collection, Paul encourages the church to be generous. He does this by contrasting two ways of giving: the wrong way to give and the right way to give. First, don’t be stingy but be generous. We see this in verse six, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully (6). Secondly, don’t feel forced to give but give freely. We see this in the next verse, each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for/because God loves a cheerful giver (7). Don’t give under pressure, whether internal or external, but give gladly, freely, and cheerfully. Two ways describing how not to give and two ways describing how to give:[[1]](#footnote-1) not stingy but generously; not forced but freely and cheerfully.

Let’s look at the wrong way to give, sow or give sparingly (6) then give reluctantly or under compulsion (7). In sowing sparingly, you feel like you must give but you hold back on your giving (6). You hold back because you don’t think you’ll have enough for yourself. In the second example (7), you feel obligated to give, from some internal motive or external pressure, but you don’t give willingly, freely, or gladly (7). Your heart is not, how much can I give, but how much can I keep for myself. That's the wrong way, the wrong motivation, to give. In contrast, the right way or motivation to give is described as the one who sows bountifully will reap bountifully (6) and then decide in your heart what to give for God loves a cheerful giver (7). In verse six you sow bountifully or generously and so you reap bountifully or generously. When you pursue generosity, God provides for you generously. Then in verse seven, you consider the needs or opportunity and so decide to give accordingly, freely, and gladly. Your heart wants to give generously, you want to share what you have for Jesus’ mission and the needs of others. Why is one stingy and reluctant to give and another generous and freely gives? Something has happened in your heart that you no longer want to hold back but want to give generously. Though Paul/we are talking about what God says about our money and giving, more deeply we are talking about our hearts. Money is a big issue for us and giving is important to talk about. But we are talking about more than just money and giving, we are talking about our hearts. Paul wrote because he wanted the church to complete the collection. But his concern went deeper. He wanted their hearts to change. He didn’t just want them to give; he wanted to give with changed hearts. The difference in the two ways of giving is a heart issue, it is in how you see God or how you feel about God. Do you see God as taker, so you hold back, or do you see God as a giver so you are free and generous. This is what our next point tells us, God provides for generous giving (8-11).

**God Provides (8-11)**

God promises to provide for our generosity three times (8, 10, 11). First,God promises to provide so you do not have to not hold back (8). All is used three times, all sufficient, you will have enough, in all things and at all times. Grace abounds, overflows from God providing the resources so we can then give generously. God the Great Giver loves to provide for his children so we can be generous in all circumstances and in all situations. Whether you have much or have little, God’s grace abounds so you can be generous (2 Cor 8:1-4). God wants you to know Him, experience Him, as a Generous Giver. He supports this promise by quoting Psalm 112:9 (9). Scattering bountifully refers to the sowing bountifully (6). And the sowing/scattering that is free and generous is described as righteousness. Next, God's promises to provide for generous givers. God provides seed for sowing to the giver and now we see that he also provides an increase in the harvest of our righteousness (10). Righteousness was the generous scattering of seed to the poor (9) so the harvest of righteousness here is what grows up from the seed (10). The harvest of your righteousness is the same thing as sowing generously and reaping generously (6). Generous sowing is righteousness, and the generous reaping is the increased harvest of this righteousness. God multiplies both the seed and the sowing. Again, God is a giver not a taker, he provides on both ends of our giving. He provides us with seed/resources so we can be generous in the first place and then he provides a bountiful harvest afterwards. Finally, he gives us a third promise, you will be enriched in every way, so you can be generous in every way (11). God provide for us generously, not to build bigger and better barns, but so we can be even more generous! The more you give, the more God will provide so you will be able to give. Jesus himself said it was more blessed to give than it is to receive. So, the whole point of this text so far is that God wants to be known as a giver not a taker so we will not be stingy and hold back but give and give generously. So, give generously because you trust your Father, the Great Giver. So far, we have seen that God commands us to give generously, that command is rooted in God’s promise to provide for us, and third, let’s look at the good of giving.

**Good of Giving (12-15)**

God accomplishes three good results in our giving. First, generosity supplies the needs of God’s people/church (12). Second, generosity causes others to thank God and give glory to him (11, 12, 15). Third, generosity brings the church closer together, more united (14). They longed for one another and prayed for one another.

**Life Group Questions:**

Ice Breaker

1. Tell us your name and if you have been baptized? When and if not, why not?

Head

1. How do sowing seeds in the ground and generous giving both require trust?
2. If we sow generously or bountifully with our giving, what will we reap, according to Paul?
3. Looking at 2 Cor 9:12-15, how does our generosity impact others?

Heart

1. What are some of the reasons why people give money to churches & parachurch ministries?
2. Are some of these motives better than others?
3. What are some of your motivations or reasons for giving?
4. How can our giving be a means of grace that God uses to change us?
5. What have you personally reaped by sowing generously?
6. Giving is a tangible expression of our trust in God. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
7. Do you have any giving experiences that encouraged your faith?
8. Besides our financial resources, what other gifts should we use for God’s glory?

Hand

1. What do you hear God saying to you through these verses?
2. How is God asking you to respond?
3. Are there any steps you can take to be more generous?

1. There is another contrast in vs. 2 Cor 9:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)