

# Giving and Serving



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 5

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 9; 2 Corinthians 9:7, 9, 13, 15; Romans 15:26, 27.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “You know that our Lord Jesus Christ is very kind. He was rich, but he made himself poor to help you. So then, because he became poor, you could become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9, EASY).



When we give, we show Jesus' love.

**IN 2 CORINTHIANS 8 AND 9**, we learn that Paul wants the Corinthians to help their brothers and sisters in Judea. God wants us to give, too. When we give, we show Jesus' love. Everyone in heaven loves to give. That's why God gave us Jesus. Look at these wonderful words: “God loved the world [people] so very, very much that he gave his only Son. Because he did that, everyone who believes in him will not lose his life, but will live for ever” (John 3:16, WE).

John 3:16 shows us why God gave Jesus to us: so that “everyone who believes in him will not lose his life, but will live for ever.” Giving is part of our work for God. No wonder Paul says that he and his companions were “Christ's [the Savior's] servants. God has also given a special job to us. We must explain his message to people so that they understand it” (1 Corinthians 4:1, EASY). We also are Jesus' servants. God gave this special work to us, too.

This week, we will look at serving God and giving. These two things were an important part of Jesus' work. The offerings we give help the church to do God's work.

## THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Paul encourages the church in Corinth to finish collecting an offering for the poor churches in Judea. The Corinthians already decided to do this task (2 Corinthians 8:10, 11; 2 Corinthians 9:5; also read 1 Corinthians 16:1–4). But a misunderstanding between Paul and the Corinthians causes problems. After the problems are solved (2 Corinthians 1–7), Paul wants the church to finish the task.

Paul tells the Corinthians about the example of the Macedonians (2 Corinthians 8:1–7). The Macedonians were very poor. But “they give to others as if they were rich” (2 Corinthians 8:2, WE). For sure, we don’t need to be rich to give as the Macedonians gave. The Macedonians’ example shows us Jesus’ gift in giving Himself for us (2 Corinthians 8:8–15).

**Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. What does this verse tell us about the example of Jesus?**

This verse is one of the most powerful truths in the whole Bible. In just a few words, Paul tells the story of Jesus’ work. We see God’s saving plan in just one verse.

Yes, Jesus was rich. As God, He lived in heaven (John 17:5). But He decided to leave heaven and come to this earth. His life here was filled with sorrows and suffering. He became poor (Luke 9:58). Jesus was One with God in heaven. But He left “everything that belonged to Him and made Himself the same as a servant who is owned by someone. He became human by being born as a man” (Philippians 2:7, NLV). “And when he lived as a man, he made himself even less important. He obeyed God completely, so that he died. He even died on a cross” (Philippians 2:8, EASY).

Jesus gave His life so that we may live forever with Him. He offered Himself to save us. Serving God and giving go together. As we saw, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is a story about a money offering. But it is also really about Jesus and how He gave Himself to us. During this week, we will see how other gifts also show us Jesus’ gift of Himself to us.

**Think about everything Jesus did for us. How do His being born, His life, death, and waking up from the dead give you hope?**



**Paul encourages the church in Corinth to finish collecting an offering for the poor churches in Judea.**

## OUR REASON FOR GIVING (2 Corinthians 8:1, 5)

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1, 5 and 2 Corinthians 9:7, 9, 13, 15. What is the important message in these verses?

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In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul talks a lot about giving: 2 Corinthians 8:1; 2 Corinthians 8:5; 2 Corinthians 9:7; 2 Corinthians 9:9; 2 Corinthians 9:13; and 2 Corinthians 9:15. As we can see, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 start and end with giving (2 Corinthians 8:1; 2 Corinthians 9:15). These two chapters talk about four reasons for giving our offerings. We give because:

**1. We are thankful for God's love and forgiveness (2 Corinthians 8:1; 2 Corinthians 9:14, 15).** In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul starts with this topic: "the grace [love and forgiveness] that God has given to the churches in Macedonia" (2 Corinthians 8:1, NIV). A little later, Paul says, "You know how much love our Lord Jesus Christ had" (2 Corinthians 8:9, WE). The love of Jesus is one of the most important reasons for giving. God did so much for us when He gave us Jesus. When we give offerings to God, we show Him our thankfulness for His love in our lives.

**2. We want to follow the example of Jesus (2 Corinthians 8:9).** Jesus was rich and became poor. (Remember, "rich" is a symbol for Jesus' life in heaven before He came to this earth as a Baby. "Poor" is a symbol for Jesus' life after He was born.) How did Jesus become poor? He gave up everything that belonged to Him in heaven to come to this earth to save us. In the same way, our offerings help other people learn about Jesus.

**3. We want to share God's blessings (2 Corinthians 9:10, 11).** We give to other people because God first gave to us. God makes us rich with His gifts. Then we may share these blessings with others.

**4. We love God and other people (2 Corinthians 8:8, 24).** Giving is the test of real love. Giving is powerful proof that love fills our hearts.

**How much do you give to the Lord? When you look at the Cross, how much do you really give compared with how much you really should give?**



Jesus gave up everything that belonged to Him in heaven to come to this earth to save us.

## PLANNING (2 CORINTHIANS 9:7)

**Read 2 Corinthians 9:7. What does this verse teach us about giving?**

God decided to save us before Adam and Eve sinned. Jesus' death for us was part of a very old plan (Revelation 13:8). So, the sin problem didn't surprise God. He was ready. As part of His plan, He gave us Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, we learn that planning is an important part of giving. Here are two important rules to follow:

**Rule #1: Planning starts with a decision.** Paul gives us this advice: "Each of you should think carefully and then decide how much you can give" (2 Corinthians 9:7, EASY). The word "decide" comes from the word 'proaireō' in the Greek language. This word is made from joining two words together: 'pro' and 'aireō.' The word 'pro' means doing something ahead of time. The word 'aireō' means "to decide" in this verse. So, 'proaireō' means deciding to do something ahead of time. Also, do you see that Paul starts 2 Corinthians 9:7 with the words "each of you"? These words show us that not everyone will give the same amount of offering. Paul is saying that people should think carefully about the amount before they give it.

**Rule #2. Planning includes knowing how much to give.** First, Paul gives an example of rule number two in 2 Corinthians 8:3. Paul says that the Macedonians "gave as much as they could and even more than that" (2 Corinthians 8:3, WE). Next, Paul uses Rule #2 to encourage the Corinthians to finish collecting money for the poor. Paul wants the Corinthians to give what they can (2 Corinthians 8:11). That's why Paul says, "God does not want you to give more than you are able to [can] give. He will be happy about what you can give" (2 Corinthians 8:12, EASY). The Bible tells us how much we should give for tithe. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. We don't follow the same rule for offerings. As Paul says, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give" (2 Corinthians 9:7, NIV). In other words, we must look carefully at how much money we earn or get. Then we must decide how much we will give as an offering. Each of us must give from how much we earn or get. We can't do that without planning.

**Do you give God what you owe Him in tithes and offerings? If your answer is "No," what is your excuse?**



**We must look carefully at how much money we earn or get. Then we must decide how much we will give as an offering.**

## A JOYFUL GIVER (2 Corinthians 8:1–5)

**Why did the Macedonians give a big offering? What made them want to do that? Read 2 Corinthians 8:1–5 for the answer.**

There are many reasons why the Macedonians gave a big offering:

**1. They were filled with joy (2 Corinthians 8:2).** The Macedonians gave because they were filled with joy. Later, Paul says, “God loves those [people] who are happy to give” (2 Corinthians 9:7, ERV). The word for “happy” in the Greek language is used only here in the New Testament. A word from the same word family is “gladly.” This word is used in Romans 12:8: “If a person can help someone, he must do it gladly” (WE). This word can be used to mean “happiness,” “being glad” or “joyful.” In 2 Corinthians 9:7, a cheerful or happy giver is someone who wants to give.

**2. They give much (2 Corinthians 8:2).** Paul says that the Macedonians gave a lot. But first he says that they are very poor. Being poor doesn’t stop them from giving. The more we give, the more God will give to us to give. Paul says, “God will make you rich in every way so that you can always give freely” (2 Corinthians 9:11, ERV). When we give, we show that the Good News about Jesus changed our lives (2 Corinthians 9:13).

**3. They gave because they wanted to (2 Corinthians 8:3).** The Macedonians didn’t have much to give. But they gave anyway because they wanted to. Their money was very limited.

**4. They believed giving was a blessing (2 Corinthians 8:4).** The Macedonians volunteered to give money to the poor in Judea. Paul says, “They asked from their hearts if they could help the Christians in Jerusalem” (2 Corinthians 8:4, NLV).

**5. They believed that giving an offering was part of giving their lives fully to God (2 Corinthians 8:5).** Paul says, “They did more than we had even hoped for! First, they gave themselves [their whole hearts and lives] to the Lord. Then they also gave themselves to us. They did that because God wanted them to do it” (2 Corinthians 8:5, EASY). When we give ourselves to the Lord, we also will serve other people. We will give them what they need. The Macedonians gave their lives to God. So, giving can be other things, not just our money.



**When we give ourselves to the Lord, we also will serve other people. We will give them what they need.**

## WORKING TOGETHER IN PEACE AND LOVE (Romans 15:26, 27)

We saw that Paul encourages the church members in Corinth to collect money for the poor churches in Judea. Paul hopes that the offering will help the Corinthians to work together in peace and love. Paul also wants to show that the non-Jewish churches are part of the same family of God as the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. In the past, the non-Jews were the enemies of the Jews. Now, they are all God's people. Paul wants the whole Christian family, both Jews and non-Jews, to work together in peace and love. That will be powerful proof of God's love for years to come.

Titus and two other Christians were responsible for the offering. God filled Titus's heart with love for the church (2 Corinthians 8:16). God also chose two other brothers in Jesus to help Titus (2 Corinthians 8:18–23). Paul says these two men “bring glory [honor] to Christ [the Savior]” (2 Corinthians 8:23, ICB). When we give offerings, we show we are loyal to Jesus. Jesus is the Head of the church (Ephesians 4:15).

In 2 Corinthians 8–9, Paul says that the offerings should be given to the people in the church that God chooses. When we bring offerings to the church, we show our love for God and the church. That's why Paul says, “So show these men that you love them. Then all the churches will be sure about you. They will know that we were right to be proud of you” (2 Corinthians 8:24, EASY).

When we bring offerings to the church, we cause peace and love in the church to grow. At the same time, we also give offerings because of the peace and love already in the church. God chose the church to help Him finish His work on the earth. Money can help the church to finish its work and to work together in peace and love. But if members are selfish, then money can cause separation in the church.

**How does Romans 15:26, 27 show Paul's wish for the church to work together in peace and love?**

Paul shows that collecting and giving offerings is a way of serving God. Giving also shows that God's love and forgiveness is alive in our hearts. Giving is worship and fellowship, too. All that from offering? Think about it.

**How do our offerings to our local churches help peace and love to grow in the church worldwide?**



**When we bring offerings to the church, we show our love for God and the church.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “A Liberal Church,” pages 335–345, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“Are your hearts filled with Jesus’ love? If yes, you will follow His example. He became poor for us to make us rich. Money, time, and our relationships with others are all gifts God gave us. These gifts have no worth if we don’t use them to serve the Lord. The church in New Testament times used all its gifts to do God’s work and build up His kingdom. We must do the same today. We must let the Holy Spirit remove from our hearts a love for the things of this life. We must be ready to give up whatever Jesus asks us to give up so that we may share the Good News about Him with other people. When we do these things, the Good News will change lives in a powerful way.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 71, adapted.

“The Lord doesn’t need our offerings. We can’t make the Lord rich with our gifts. King David says: ‘Everything that we have comes from you. So we are giving back to you things that already belong to you.’ [1 Chronicles 29:14, EASY]. At the same time, God allows us to show Him how much we are thankful for His love. We can save our money and not spend it all on ourselves. Then we can give it as an offering to God to help other people learn about His love and forgiveness. Our offerings show God how much we love and thank Him for everything He does. God made no other way for us to show our love and thankfulness to Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 18, 19, adapted.



“Our offerings show God how much we love and thank Him for everything He does.”

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think some more about 2 Corinthians 8:9. How does the example of Jesus help us to be better managers of everything God gives us?
- ② John 3:16 helps us to understand that everyone in heaven loves to give. Read John 15:13; Ephesians 5:2, 25; Galatians 2:19, 20; and 1 John 3:16. What is the same about these verses and John 3:16? What message do they teach us?
- ③ How does giving bless our lives? Read 2 Corinthians 8, 9 for the answer. What else can we give God, along with our offerings? What does Jesus’ example of giving teach us?

## BLESS YOU!—PART 1

People who looked for faith didn't often go looking for it in Copenhagen, Denmark. Rob and Bethany knew that moving to this European city meant they would need to change their ideas about success as Bible workers. Their success would be in the friendships they made and not in the number of people they baptized.

Rob and Bethany arrived in Copenhagen in 2024. The people in the city didn't have much interest in having God in their lives. But Rob and Bethany didn't come to preach sermons on street corners. They came to build friendships.

Years earlier, the couple served in a church before they went to school to study religion. At the school, God filled their hearts with a wish to serve Him in a new way.

Rob said, "Almost everyone we knew and worked with was Seventh-day Adventist. We understood that we wanted to meet people who were not our religion. We wanted friends we could introduce to Jesus." They wanted to help start new churches.

The first church that Rob and Bethany helped start was in British Columbia. Rob and Bethany never did this type of work before. During this experience, they became friends with people with different beliefs. They soon learned how to share their faith while they connected with their new friends.

Four years later, Rob and Bethany were invited to start a church in Copenhagen. They now felt ready to do this work. They decided to make relationships and friendships the most important part of their work. Rob came up with a word that shows their plan: **BLESS**. Each letter stands for part of their plan.

- **B** is for Begin With Prayer. Rob explains, "You start with a personal friendship with Jesus. Then you ask Him to help you lead other people to Him."
- **L** is for Listen. Rob says, "You don't talk first. You learn. You listen to other people's stories and lives. You learn about their needs and how God is already working in their lives."
- **E** is for Eat. Rob says, "One of the best ways to connect with someone is to share a meal together. Eating together builds trust."
- **S** stands for Serve. Rob explains, "When we serve people in small ways, they open their hearts to us."
- **S** is for Share. Share comes last for a reason. Rob explains, "When someone is ready, share what Jesus does for you in your own life."

Rob and Bethany weren't starting with a program or a building. They started with prayer.

*Read part 2 of their story next week.*



**"Eating together  
builds trust."**