

Bible Study
Gospel Giving



Trinity Church Adelaide
2020

Welcome to Gospel Giving. The main purpose of this series isn't to raise giving at church. It's not even to raise giving to other things such as mission or charity. The main purpose is to raise *generosity* in us; a giving *spirit*. It's to stir up in us a passion to be generous with our money. Of course, one of the natural results of this will be that we give more money to things, but that's just the secondary aim.

The main aim of this series is for us to be so moved by God's grace and so captivated by his vision for our life that we become more generous people. That's what this series is about.

On Sundays, it will consist of three sermons: 'Why Give?', 'How Much Should I Give?', and 'Who Should I Give To?' These will be topical sermons that range around the Bible.

To complement these sermons, these studies will focus on one passage of Scripture - 2 Corinthians 8-9 - and what it says about giving. 2 Corinthians 8-9 is a discrete passage about the collection Paul is taking up for the church in Jerusalem and so has lots to say about giving, generosity and how the gospel motivates them.

In addition, there will be daily Bible reading notes for use throughout the series (accessed through 'Church in a Box'), as well as encouraging personal stories to be watching out for on our Facebook pages.

Finally, members of our church have been sent a copy of our new *Giving at Trinity* handbook, which explains some of the principles behind giving to church specifically and how we spend our money at church. This is really just for your information and to help you start giving if you've not yet begun. If you missed getting this, please feel free to contact our office for a copy.

My prayer is that this will be a wonderful, inspiring and enlarging series for us as a church and for us as individuals. I really hope you enjoy it.

Des Smith
Senior Pastor
Trinity Church Adelaide

Study 1 - 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

As we begin three weeks thinking about generosity, what are one or two examples of generosity that come to mind for you?

Some context to 2 Corinthians 8-9 will be helpful before we begin. 2 Corinthians 8-9 is about a collection Paul was taking up for the impoverished Jerusalem church. This collection had its origins a decade before 2 Corinthians was written, when Paul and Barnabas made a missionary 'deal' with the key leaders of the Jerusalem church, Peter, James and John. The deal was that Peter, James and John would evangelise the Jews and release Paul and Barnabas to evangelise the Gentiles, on the condition that they still support the Jewish mission by taking up a collection for the impoverished Jerusalem church (Galatians 2:9-10). The rationale for this was simple: the Gentiles had received the spiritual blessing of the gospel from the Jews, therefore the Jews in their hour of need should receive the material blessing of financial support from the Gentiles (Romans 15:26-27). As such, Paul and his associates started taking up a collection from the Gentile churches to help Jerusalem. Paul set out the arrangements for this collection from the Corinthians in his first letter to them.

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4.

- What instructions does Paul give to the Corinthians concerning the collection?

- What principles about Christian giving do they give us?

Paul writes 2 Corinthians about a year later from Macedonia, the region where the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica were located. Titus had just returned from Corinth and told Paul how the Corinthians were going and from 2 Corinthians 8:11 it seems that they'd shown good intention, but not much action. The Corinthians have fallen behind in setting aside their money for the collection. So Paul writes to them to urge them to catch up. Let's see what he says about it.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

Looking closely at v1-5, for the Macedonian churches what is the:

- *circumstance* of their giving?

- *content* of their giving?

- *attitude* of their giving?

How does Paul use the example of the Macedonian churches to motivate the Corinthians in v6-8?

What further example does Paul give to motivate the Corinthians in v9?

Read Philippians 2:5-11.

The church in the city of Philippi was one of those Macedonian churches. How does this passage give more information on what it meant for Jesus to be 'rich' and then to have 'become poor' for our sake?

Returning to 2 Corinthians 8.

From what we read in v13-15, what objection do you think the Corinthians may have had to the collection, and how does Paul answer it?

Four times, Paul says that generosity is itself a gift or grace: 8:1, 4 ('service' translates 'grace'), 6, 7. Do you think the Corinthians were thinking of generosity as a gift? Do we tend to think of generosity as a gift? Why or why not?

Bringing everything together, what principles about giving and generosity can we draw from this section? Which of these principles already resonate with you? Which ones need work?

We all have blind spots in the way we respond to God's word. To try and think broadly about it, have a go at identifying one thing that this passage prompts you to:

- **Trust** about God and his character and promises...
- **Say** to encourage someone...
- **Do** in the week to come...
- **Pray** in light of what we've read...

Study 2 - 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5

Last week we saw that four times in just seven verses Paul referred to generosity and giving as a 'gift' or 'grace' from God. What reflections have you had on this very positive perspective on generosity in the week since then?

As we continue on through 2 Corinthians, a bit more context to the historical background of 2 Corinthians 8-9 will be helpful. In 1 Corinthians 16:3-4, we read that Paul was planning to come to Corinth himself and then send the collection on to Jerusalem with the men the Corinthians approved. He would also go with those men if that seemed like a good idea at the time. However now, a year later, Paul (writing from Macedonia), has decided for other reasons not to go to Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:1) and so he is writing to the Corinthians instead and sending a group of men with the letter.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:16-24

Who is travelling back to Corinth?

Why?

What are these men like and why is that so important?

How are the Corinthians to treat them?

Thinking beyond this particular passage, why do you think financial transparency is so important in churches?

How much do you know about our financial processes at Trinity? Are there things you'd like to know? (Note: our *Giving at Trinity* booklet has information about how our money is spent and received, but we're always happy to answer questions).

Read 2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Paul returns to encouraging the Corinthians to keep their promise and give to the collection. How does he go about it?

What are his concerns for the Corinthians in this? (You might like to read Romans 15:25-26 to see how it turned out, noting that it refers to Achaia which was the region where Corinth was the major city)

God wants people to be eager and enthusiastic about giving, as we saw in 8:17, 19; 9:2, 5. What things get you eager about giving? How can we encourage each other to grow in an attitude of eagerness and enthusiasm to be generous?

God also wants people's eagerness to be matched by follow-through: once we've planned to give, we should take action! How can we make sure that when we plan to give, we actually do? What practical steps can we take to help? Rather than just talking in hypotheticals, can you boldly set out one or two action points for the coming week?

How would God have us pray in light of what we have read from his word?

Study 3 - 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

How much should Christians give? What are some of the answers for this question that you've come across?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:7.

From this verse, how much should Christians give? Why?

This seems like a risky policy though. It could be taken as a licence to give very little! Let's read further to see how God guards against that.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11.

What principle does Paul outline in 9:6?
(see also Proverbs 11:24, 25).

Reading through to v11, what does it mean to 'reap generously'?

Inasmuch as it involves God caring for us financially, from verse 11, why does God do this?

For discussion and prayer

What are some of the psychological blockers for you to giving generously? What here could help unblock them?

It's great when we give money and then see what it achieves, e.g. helping a sponsor child. What's one time you've given money and seen it do good and that made you really happy?

What's one time you've been moved to praise because of someone's generosity?

Sometimes we give to things but leave the relationship at that. What's one way you could deepen the relationship with those you give to so that your giving might not just fund their ministry but also result in 'their hearts going out to you,' and yours to them?

Have you yet 'decided in your heart what to give' and started giving it? When will you set time aside to give careful and prayerful consideration to this?

We've certainly got lots to pray about! Reflect again on 2 Corinthians 8:9 and ask God to grow us to be more like our Lord Jesus.