



Thankfulness is a genuine mark of a Christ Follower and key to being content. This week Pastor Tim will teach us from Philippians 4 how being thankful causes Christ Followers to want to give to further the Kingdom of God. The fruit of our generosity is contentment because we are trusting Christ and not ourselves.

Grace and peace!

Deering Dyer  
Small Groups Pastor

## Group Study Questions

### Contentment - Philippians 4:11-20

#1 Contentment comes from TRUSTING IN A SOVEREIGN GOD

#2 Contentment comes from LEARNING TO BE SATISFIED

#3 Contentment comes from LIVING ABOVE CIRCUMSTANCES

#4 Contentment comes from DEPENDING ON GOD'S POWER

### This week...

#5 Contentment comes from BEING THANKFUL

1. Have someone in the group read Philippians 4:11-20 aloud. What do verses 14-20 say about being thankful?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Has someone ever helped you and you just wanted to thank them over and over again? How did that feel? What was your response?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Has thankfulness ever encouraged you to be more giving? If yes, why was that the case?

### A Theology of Christian Giving

4. Pastor Tim explained that for the Christ Follower, giving is a PLANNED OPPORTUNITY. In Philippians 4:10 we see that the church in Philippi had to make preparations to give. Have someone in your group read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 aloud.

*Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.*

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

5. Ask the text (1 Cor 16:1-4) the following questions and discuss the answers as a group.
- A. Why should we give?
  - B. When should we give?
  - C. Who should give?
  - D. Where should we give?
  - E. How much should we give?
6. The theology of Christian giving is also a **PURPOSEFUL RESPONSE**. What was the response of the Believers in Philippi to Paul? Discuss. (Hint: Philippians 4:14)
7. The Church in Philippi was in partnership with Paul for a common mission. The mission at Crossroads Community Church is ***"To turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ."*** Do you see yourself as a partner with Crossroads in this mission when you give to the ministry? Why or why not?
8. The theology of Christian giving is also a **PROFITABLE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**. We know that we can't out give God. So why do you think giving is necessary for our spiritual growth? Read Malachi 3:6-10 and discuss.

9. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. Are you a cheerful giver? What does it mean to be a cheerful giver?

10. Read Luke 6:38. What is Jesus promising when we give with the right motivations?

11. If God doesn't need our money, why is giving **PLEASING TO GOD**?

12. Discuss the eternal impact of giving.

13. Discuss the relationship between contentment, being thankful and giving generously.

## Further Study and Review

### Commentary on 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

#### The Bible Exposition Commentary<sup>1</sup>

**Giving is an act of worship.** Each member was to come to the Lord's Day gathering prepared to give his share for that week. The early church met on the first day of the week in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (The Holy Spirit came on the church at Pentecost on the first day of the week.) It is tragic when church members give only as a duty and forget that our offerings are to be "spiritual sacrifices" presented to the Lord (Phil. 4:18). Giving should be an act of worship to the resurrected and ascended Saviour.

**Giving should be systematic.** Some students have suggested that many people were paid on the first day of the week during that time in history. But even if they were not, each believer was to set aside his offering at home and then bring it to the assembly on the first day. Paul did not want to have to take up a number of collections when he arrived in Corinth. He wanted the whole contribution to be ready. If today's church members were as systematic in their giving as they are in handling their other financial matters, the work of the Lord would not suffer as it sometimes does.

**Giving was personal and individual.** Paul expected each member to share in the offering, the rich and poor alike. Anyone who had an income was privileged to share and to help those in need. He wanted all to share in the blessing.

**Giving is to be proportionate.** "As God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. 16:2) suggests that believers who have more should give more. The Jewish believers in the church would have been accustomed to the tithe, but Paul did not mention any special proportion. Certainly the tithe (10 percent of one's income) is a good place to *begin* our stewardship, but we must not remain at that level. As the Lord gives us more, we should plan to give more.

The trouble is, too many saints, as they earn more, involve themselves in more and more financial obligations; and then they do not have more to give to the Lord. Instead of finding a suitable "level" and remaining there, they keep trying to "go higher," and their income is *spent* rather than *invested*. As the old saying goes, "When your outgo exceeds your income, then your upkeep is your downfall."

Paul made it clear in 2 Corinthians 8-9 that Christian giving is a *grace*, the outflow of the grace of God in our lives and not the result of promotion or pressure. An open heart cannot maintain a closed hand. If we appreciate the grace of God extended to us, we will want to express that grace by sharing with others.

**Money is to be handled honestly.** The various churches involved in this special offering appointed delegates to help Paul manage it and take it safely to Jerusalem. (See 2 Cor. 8:16-24 for more information on the "finance committee" that assisted Paul.) It is unfortunate when Christian ministries lose their testimony because they mismanage funds entrusted to them. Every ministry ought to be businesslike in its financial affairs. Paul was very careful not to allow anything to happen that would give his enemies opportunity to accuse him of stealing funds (2 Cor. 8:20-21).

This explains why Paul encouraged the *churches* to share in the offering and to select dependable representatives to help manage it. Paul was not against *individuals* giving personally; in this chapter, as well as in Romans 16, he named various individuals who assisted him personally. This no doubt included helping him with his financial needs. But generally speaking, Christian giving is church-centered. Many churches encourage their members to give designated gifts through the church budget.

It is interesting that Paul mentioned the offering just after his discussion about the resurrection. There were no "chapter breaks" in the original manuscripts, so the readers would go right from Paul's hymn of victory into his discussion about money. Doctrine and duty go together; so do worship and works. Our giving is "not in vain" because our Lord is alive. It is His resurrection power that motivates us to give and to serve.

### Commentary on 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

#### The Bible Exposition Commentary<sup>2</sup>

##### Your Giving Will Bless You (2 Cor. 9:6-11)

"Give, and it shall be given unto you," was our Lord's promise; and it still holds true (Luke 6:38). The "good measure" He gives back to us is not always money or material goods, but it is always worth far more than we gave. Giving is not something we *do*, but something we *are*. Giving is a way of life for the Christian who understands the grace of God. The world simply does not understand a statement like Proverbs 11:24: "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." In grace giving, our motive is not "to get something," but receiving God's blessing is one of the fringe benefits.

If our giving is to bless us and build us up, we must be careful to follow the principles that Paul explained in this section.

**The principle of increase: we reap in measure as we sow (v. 6).** This principle needs little explanation, because we see it operating in everyday life. The farmer who sows much seed will have a better chance for a bigger harvest. The investor who puts a large sum of money in the bank will certainly collect more dividends. The more we invest in the work of the Lord, the more "fruit" will abound to our account (Phil. 4:10-20).

<sup>1</sup>Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Co 16:1

<sup>2</sup>Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 2 Co 9:6

Whenever we are tempted to forget this principle, we need to remind ourselves that God was unsparing in His giving. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32) In both nature and grace, God is a generous Giver; and he who would be godly must follow the divine example.

**The principle of intent: we reap as we sow with right motives (v. 7).** Motive makes absolutely no difference to the farmer! If he sows good seed and has good weather, he will reap a harvest whether he is working for profit, pleasure, or pride. It makes no difference how he plans to use the money that he earns, the harvest will probably come just the same.

But not so with the Christian: motive in giving (or in any other activity) is vitally important. Our giving must come from the heart, and the motive in the heart must please God. We must not be "sad givers" who give grudgingly, or "mad givers" who give because we have to ("of necessity"); but we should be "glad givers" who cheerfully share what we have because we have experienced the grace of God. "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed" (Prov. 22:9).

If we cannot give joyfully (the Greek word gives us our English word *hilarious*), then we must open our hearts to the Lord and ask Him to grant us His grace. Certainly God can bless a gift that is given out of a sense of duty, but God cannot bless the giver unless his heart is right. Grace giving means that God blesses the giver as well as the gift, and that the giver is a blessing to others.

**The principle of immediacy: we reap even while we are sowing (vv. 8–11).** The farmer has to wait for his harvest, but the believer who practices grace giving begins to reap the harvest immediately. To be sure, there are long-range benefits from our giving, but there are also immediate blessings.

To begin with, we start to share God's abundant grace (2 Cor. 9:8). The "universals" in this verse are staggering: *all* grace; *always*; *all* sufficiency; *every* good work. This does not mean that God makes every Christian wealthy in material things; but it does mean that the Christian who practices grace giving will always have what he needs when he needs it. Furthermore, the grace of God enriches him morally and spiritually so that he grows in Christian character. In his walk and his work, he depends wholly on the sufficiency of God.

It is disturbing to see how many Christians today are totally dependent on others for their spiritual resources. Preachers cannot get sermons unless they borrow them from a book or a cassette. Church officers are bewildered about what to do with a problem unless they phone two or three well-known preachers for advice. Far too many church members have to consult with the pastor once a week or they fall apart spiritually.

The word *sufficiency* means "adequate resources within" (see Phil. 4:11). Through Jesus Christ, we can have the adequacy to meet the demands of life. As Christians, we do need to help and encourage one another; but we must not depend on one another. Our dependence must be on the Lord. He alone can give us that "well of water" in the heart that makes us sufficient for life (John 4:14).

We not only share God's grace, but we also share His righteousness (2 Cor. 9:9). Paul quoted Psalm 112:9 to prove his point. That psalm describes the righteous man who has no fears because his heart is sincere and obedient to the Lord. Paul did not suggest that we *earn* righteousness by our giving, because the only way to get righteousness is by faith in Jesus Christ. However, if our hearts are right, our giving will be used by God to make our characters righteous. Grace giving builds Christian character.

We reap as we sow, and we share God's miracle multiplication of what we give and do (2 Cor. 9:10). The farmer has to decide how much seed he will keep for food, and how much he will plant. If the harvest has been lean, there is less seed available both for eating and planting. But the Christian who believes in grace giving never has to worry about this decision: God supplies all that he needs. There is always spiritual and material "bread" for the eating and spiritual and material "seed" for the sowing.

Paul referred here to Isaiah 55:10–11, a passage that uses "seed" and "bread" to refer to both the Word of God and to the literal harvest in the field. There is no such thing as "secular" and "sacred" in the Christian life. The giving of money is just as spiritual an act as the singing of a hymn or the handing out of a Gospel tract. *Money is seed*. If we give it according to the principles of grace, it will multiply to the glory of God and meet many needs. If we use it in ways other than God desires, the harvest will be poor.

Finally, as we sow, we are enriched and we enrich others (2 Cor. 9:11). The farmer reaps immediate physical benefits as he works in his field, but he has to wait for the harvest. The Christian who is motivated by grace reaps the blessings of personal enrichment in his or her own life and character, and this enrichment benefits others. The final result is glory to God as others give thanks to Him. Paul was careful to point out that grace giving does not bring credit to us; it brings thanksgiving to God. We are but channels through whom God works to meet the needs of others.

But 2 Corinthians 9:11 teaches another truth: God enriches us so that we may give even more bountifully. One of the joys of grace giving is the joy of giving more and more. Everything we have—not just our income—belongs to God, is given to God, and is used by God to accomplish His work. We are enriched in everything because we share everything with Him and with others.

As a pastor, I have watched young Christians lay hold of these principles of grace giving and start to grow. It has been a great joy to see them trust God as their giving is motivated by grace. At the same time, I have seen other believers smile at these principles and gradually impoverish themselves. Some of them "prospered" financially, but their income was their downfall: it did not enrich them. They had their reward, but they lost their opportunities for spiritual enrichment.

Grace giving means that we really believe that God is the great giver, and we use our material and spiritual resources accordingly. You simply cannot outgive God!