

**Xenos Christian Fellowship**  
**Christian Ministry Unit 3: Moving Into a Ministry Lifestyle**  
**Week 7 – Loving Through Financial Generosity: Principles of Christian Giving**

## **Introduction**

Giving God's love away to others involves cultivating a godly manner of dealing with our money and material possessions. The Bible describes this as a habit of consistent, sacrificial financial giving to God's work. In order to live this lifestyle in the midst of a materialistic culture, we need to form deep biblical convictions about this area as soon as possible in our Christian lives.

## **2 Corinthians 8 & 9: Historical setting**

**(1 Cor. 16:1-3) Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 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. And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem.**

**(2 Cor. 8:10) And I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it.**

### **1. Giving is motivated by God's grace.**

**(2 Cor. 8:1-4,9) Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, (2) that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. (3) For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, (4) begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints . . . (9) For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.**

**(2 Cor. 9:15) Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!**

- Why does grace motivate giving?

- Giving under grace vs. under law

<b>UNDER LAW</b>	<b>UNDER GRACE</b>
“I give in order to be accepted by God”	“I give because I have been accepted by God”
“My giving is a duty that I resent”	“My giving is a privilege that I enjoy”
“I give the least I can to keep God & others off my back”	“I give as much as I can to express my joy & gratitude to God for his love”

QUALIFICATION: It is not legalistic in principle to call on and/or remind each other to make giving commitments.

QUALIFICATION: 2 Cor. 9:7 does not mean that we should not give if we do not feel generous.

## 2. Christians are stewards.

**(2 Cor. 8:5) . . . and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.**

- Stewardship is "the use of God-given resources for the accomplishment of God-given goals."<sup>1</sup>
- Biblical implications of stewardship

*Everything we have is God's and not ours.*

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<sup>1</sup> Ron Blue, *Master Your Money* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1997), p. 23.

**(Psa. 24:1) The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.**

**(1 Cor. 4:7) For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?**

*We will give an account to God for how we use his resources, including his money.*

**(Mat. 25:19, 21) Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them...21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.'**

**(Rom. 14:12) So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.**

*Therefore, we should manage God's money to advance his kingdom.*

**(Luke 14:33) So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.**

**(Luke 16:9-11) And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon (money) of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon (money), who will entrust the true riches to you?**

- Giving as an owner vs. as a steward

OWNERS	STEWARDS
"How much of my money will I give to God?"	"How much of God's money will I keep for myself?"
"Will I enjoy this purchase?" "Can I afford it?"	"How will this purchase affect my ability to advance God's purposes?"
"My financial affairs are my own private business."	"I will seek wise counsel so I can be faithful with God's resources."

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NOTE: When we live with a grace-motivated attitude and a steward mentality, we are able to enjoy our giving and the possessions and pleasures God grants us.

**(1 Chr. 29:6-22) Then the rulers of the fathers' households, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with the overseers over the king's work, offered willingly; (7) and for the service for the house of God they gave 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, and 10,000 talents of silver, and 18,000 talents of brass, and 100,000 talents of iron. (8) And whoever possessed precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, in care of Jehiel the Gershonite. (9) Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the LORD with a whole heart, and King David also rejoiced greatly. (10) So David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, "Blessed are You, O LORD God of Israel our father, forever and ever . . . (12) Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone . . . (14) For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given to You . . . (16) and all is Yours . . . (20) And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers, and bowed low and did homage to the LORD and to the king. (21) And on the next day they made sacrifices to the LORD and offered burnt offerings to the LORD, 1,000 bulls, 1,000 rams and 1,000 lambs, with their libations and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel. (22) So they ate and drank that day before the LORD with great gladness . . .**

### **3. Our financial giving is an index of our spiritual vitality and maturity.**

**(2 Cor. 8:7) But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.**

**"Your checkbook reveals all that you really believe about stewardship . . . A person who has been a Christian for even a short while can fake prayer, Bible study, evangelism, going to church, but he can't fake what his checkbook reveals. Maybe that is why so many of us are so secretive about our personal finances."<sup>2</sup>**

- This is why we require [Servant Team](#) members to demonstrate a record of consistent and generous giving by joining the **Fiscal Support Team**.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ron Blue, *Master Your Money* (New York; Thomas Nelson, 1997) p. 20,21.

<sup>3</sup> Leaders whose life situation makes it impossible to give at these levels are waived from meeting this requirement.

**(1 Tim. 3:3,8) [Elders must be] . . . free from the love of money . . .  
 (8) Deacons likewise must be men of dignity . . .**

- We should talk about this area with one another and in our discipleship work.

#### **4. Give according to what you have**

**(2 Cor. 8:12) For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.**

- We may give significantly no matter how little we may have.

**(Mark 12:41-44) And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. (42) And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. (43) 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; (44) 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."**

**“This is. . . the new mathematics, the arithmetic of heaven. God estimates our gifts not so much by their financial value, as by the sacrifice involved, the love that accompanies it, and the amount that is left. The supreme value of the widow's gift lay in the fact that she ‘out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on’ - while the others gave ‘out of their surplus’ (Mk. 12:44). Here is a searching test of our giving, but that incident should greatly encourage those who have only a little to give, but give it gladly.”<sup>4</sup>**

- Start giving now.

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<sup>4</sup> Oswald Sanders, *Enjoying Intimacy With God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 155.

- Choose an amount that affects your lifestyle.

**(Mal. 1:6-14) "'A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' (7) You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.' (8) But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. (9) "But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. (10) "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you. (11) For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts. (12) "But you are profaning it, in that you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.' (13) You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it," says the LORD of hosts, "and you bring what was taken by robbery, and what is lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand?" says the LORD. (14) "But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock, and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the LORD of hosts, "and My name is feared among the nations."**

**(C. S. Lewis) "I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving way too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them."<sup>5</sup>**

Live now in such a way that if the Lord called you to full-time ministry, you could do it.

Although the tithe is no longer in force, 10% is a good rule of thumb and feasible for many of us as a starting point.

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<sup>5</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996), p. 82.

Make this a matter of family discussion.

- Incorporate your giving as a definite part of your budget.

**(Prov. 3:9) Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce . . .**

**(1 Cor. 16:2\*) 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.**

The **Xenos Pledge Program** facilitates this.

“What about windfalls (bonuses; gifts; inheritances)?”

“What about faith giving?”

## **5. The needs of others should have a moral bearing on our finances.**

**(2 Cor. 8:13-15) For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality—at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality; as it is written, “HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK.”**

See also Eph. 4:28; Gal. 6:10.

- God has a special concern for the poor.

**(Prov. 14:31) He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.**

- We have no right to hoard money or possessions when we are aware of others in legitimate need.

QUALIFICATION: We should not let lazy Christians take advantage of the generosity of others.

**(2 Thess. 3:6-12) Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. (7) For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, (8) nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; (9) not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. (10) For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. (11) For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. (12) Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.**

**(1 Tim. 5:8,16) But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever . . . (16) If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, let her assist them, and let not the church be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.**

- We should pursue a simple lifestyle, which involves choosing to live well within your means so that as God prospers you in your earning power, you can give more and more proportionately to his purposes.

QUALIFICATION: Some people, due to their job situations, are unable to support their families without both spouses working.

- Learn the plight of the poor (see Week 2).

- Xenos' General Fund, our Humanitarian Aid & Development Fund, and other reputable organizations support missions and other ministries to the poor.
- Be a good steward of your abilities – don't be underemployed.

**(Proverbs 6:6-11) Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! 7 It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, 8 yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. 9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.**

## 6. God abundantly blesses the gracious giver.

**(2 Cor. 9: 6ff, 8-14) Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully . . . 8 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; 9 as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ABIDES FOREVER." 10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; 11 you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. 13 Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, 14 while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.**

- We *may* reap increased financial resources to enable us to give more (9:10a).
- We will reap increased effectiveness for God (9:10b).

**(Luke 16:9-11) And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the**

**eternal dwellings. (10) He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. (11) If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you?**

**(Acts 4:32-34) And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. (33) And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. (34) For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales . . .**

- We will reap the privilege of seeing others affected for Christ (9:11b-13).
- We will reap increased friends who love us and pray for us (9:14).
- We will reap increased eternal reward (1 Tim. 6:19).

**(1 Tim. 6:17-19) Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. (18) Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, (19) storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.**

## **7. Our first responsibility is to support our local church.**

**(1 Tim. 5:17,18) Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. (18) For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."**

- Ways to do this:

### **Voluntary Pledge Program & Fiscal Support Team**

You can pledge online at <http://www.xenos.org/aboutxenos/pledge.htm>.

## **Humanitarian Aid and Development Fund**

### **Missions**

### **Xenos Building Fund**

To make a pledge to the General Fund, Humanitarian Aid & Development Fund or Building Fund, contact Alan Burkholder. If you want to support one of our missionaries, contact Melissa Harvin. Both Alan and Melissa can be reached at the Xenos office: (614) 823-6500.

### **Memory Verses**

**2 Cor. 8:7\*** - Consistent, sacrificial giving is a non-optional component of spiritual vitality and maturity. We cannot be true disciples of Christ without this.

**2 Cor. 9:6-11\*\*** - God blesses bountiful financial giving in a variety of ways.

**1 Cor. 16:2\*** - Our financial giving should be regular and consistent.

### **Assignment**

Respond to questions on the handout entitled *Discerning Materialism*.