

# The Act of Christian Giving

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## Key Scripture

2 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV) Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

## Sermon in One Sentence

Christian giving is a joyful, intentional, and God-honoring act of worship, flowing from a transformed heart that trusts in God's abundant provision and steadfast love.

## Introduction

I recently read about a study conducted by the National Philanthropic Trust revealing that Americans gave an astounding \$484.85 billion to charities in 2021. That's a staggering figure, highlighting a deep-seated human impulse to contribute to causes beyond ourselves. Yet, for many Christians, discussions about giving often invoke a sense of discomfort, anxiety, or even legalistic obligation. We wrestle with questions like, "How much is enough? Am I doing it right? Is God really requiring this of me?" This tension often stems from a misunderstanding of what biblical giving truly entails, reducing it to a mere transaction rather than viewing it as a profound act of worship and a joyful expression of faith.

Today, we delve into the heart of Christian giving, moving beyond the mere act of donation to understand the spiritual wellspring from which it flows. We will see that God invites us not to grudgingly sacrifice, but to joyfully participate in His kingdom work through our generosity. Our passage from 2 Corinthians 9:7 is a cornerstone, offering profound insight into the character of a giver that truly pleases God.

Let us turn our hearts and minds to this foundational truth, allowing the Spirit to recalibrate our understanding and posture towards giving, transforming it from a dreaded duty into a delightful discipline inspired by our loving God.

## Historical & Biblical Context

The Apostle Paul wrote his second letter to the church at Corinth around 55-57 AD during his third missionary journey. This letter is deeply personal and often addresses specific challenges within the Corinthian community, including issues of division, immorality, and false apostles. Chapters 8 and 9, in particular, are dedicated to an extensive exhortation regarding financial giving, specifically for a collection Paul was gathering to relieve the poverty-stricken church in Jerusalem. Paul was not simply asking for money; he was strategically using this collection to demonstrate the unity of the Gentile and Jewish churches and to alleviate suffering among believers. His teaching on giving, therefore, is not merely a pragmatic fundraising appeal, but a theological discourse on the nature of grace, spiritual maturity, and mutual care within the body of Christ. The principles he lays out, emphasizing intention, cheerfulness, and God's love,

transcend the historical occasion and remain timeless truths for every generation of believers.

## **Main Point I — Giving Begins in the Heart**

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 9:7a (ESV) Each one must give as he has decided in his heart...

Genuine Christian giving isn't measured solely by the amount, but by the attitude of the heart from which it springs. Paul emphasizes that the decision to give originates "in his heart," implying a thoughtful, deliberate, and personal commitment, not an impulsive or externally coerced act. This isn't about emptying your pockets because a plate is passed, but about a prayerful consideration of what God has entrusted to you and how He is calling you to use it for His glory. A heart-decided gift reflects a spiritual maturity that understands stewardship, recognizing that everything we possess ultimately belongs to God.

This internal decision process speaks to the sanctity of the individual's conscience and their direct relationship with God regarding their resources. It means that giving is deeply personal; it's a conversation between you and your Creator. The amount, the frequency, and the recipient are all aspects of this prayerful deliberation. When giving flows from a heart that has communed with God, it transforms from a financial transaction into an act of worship, a tangible expression of trust and love for the One who provides all things. This intentionality ensures that our giving is not performative, but deeply rooted in our spiritual conviction.

## **Main Point II — Giving Is Not Under Compulsion**

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 9:7b (ESV) ...not reluctantly or under compulsion...

Paul is keenly aware that giving can be born out of less-than-holy motives: guilt, social pressure, fear of judgment, or a desire for recognition. He explicitly warns against giving "reluctantly or under compulsion." "Reluctantly" (ἀλ■πιης – lup■s) implies sadness or grief, suggesting a burdensome feeling, as if the act of giving deeply pains the giver. "Under compulsion" (■v■γκης – anank■s) refers to necessity or being forced, highlighting external pressure or a sense of obligation that strips the act of its free will. Neither of these states is pleasing to God, regardless of the size of the gift.

This liberating principle underscores God's desire for a relationship with us built on love and freedom, not obligation. A forced gift, while it might meet a need, does not honor God because it lacks the spiritual essence of true worship. God values the spirit of the giver far more than the sum of the donation. If we give out of guilt or external pressure, our heart is not aligned with His, and the act becomes a source of resentment rather than joy. True Christian giving flows from an inner freedom, a grateful response to God's immense generosity towards us, not from a sense of dread or duty.

## **Main Point III — God Delights in the Cheerful Giver**

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 9:7c (ESV) ...for God loves a cheerful giver.

This concluding clause encapsulates the very heart of Christian giving and is perhaps one of the most well-known verses on the subject. The Greek word for "cheerful" is ■λαρ■v (hilaron), from which we derive our English word "hilarious." Imagine that! God loves a "hilarious" giver – someone who gives with

joy, gladness, and enthusiasm, even with a sense of playful delight. This isn't a somber obligation, but a joyous privilege. It's the kind of giving that flows naturally from a heart overwhelmed by God's grace and goodness, eager to participate in His redemptive work.

A cheerful giver understands that they are not losing something, but participating in something infinitely greater. They see giving less as a sacrifice and more as an investment in God's kingdom, an opportunity to demonstrate their faith and trust in His provision. This joy is not manufactured or superficial; it is a deep spiritual delight rooted in the knowledge that God Himself is the ultimate giver, who "gave his only Son" (John 3:16). When we give cheerfully, we reflect His character, showing the world that our treasure is not found in earthly possessions but in the eternal King who loves a joyful, giving heart.

## Illustration

In the early 20th century, there lived a Scottish factory worker named Robert Arthington. He was an unconventional and reclusive man, known for his frugality, often wearing old clothes and living a very simple life. Yet, secretly, he was amassing a fortune. When Arthington died in 1900, his will revealed that he had bequeathed a staggering £800,000 (roughly £100 million in today's currency) — almost his entire fortune — to various missionary societies, with the explicit instruction that the money be used to evangelize "unreached" peoples before Christ's return. He had devoted his entire life to earning and saving, not for his own comfort or luxury, but with a singular, fervent passion for the advancement of the Gospel around the globe. He truly gave as he had decided in his heart, not reluctantly, but with an enthusiastic purpose that transcended his very life. His giving was a lifelong act of cheerful devotion, demonstrating a profound trust in God's mission, even in his quiet, unassuming life.

## Practical Application

- 1. Prayerfully Determine Your Giving (Heart-Decided Giving):** This week, instead of just reacting to requests for money, take intentional time to pray about your giving. Ask God what He would have you give, not just as a percentage, but as a joyful response to His grace.
- 2. Examine Your Motivations:** Before you give, pause and reflect on *why* you are giving. If you find yourself giving out of guilt, pressure, or a desire for recognition, confess that to God and ask Him to transform your heart into one overflowing with cheerful generosity.
- 3. Practice Gratitude-Driven Giving:** Make a conscious effort to connect your giving to specific blessings you've received from God. Let gratitude be the fuel for your generosity, reminding you that all you have is from Him.
- 4. Identify a Specific Kingdom Need and Give Sacrificially:** Look for an area where your giving can make a tangible difference in advancing God's kingdom, whether locally or globally (e.g., your local church, a missionary, a trusted Christian charity). Consider a sacrificial gift that stretches your faith, reflecting a deeper trust in God's provision.

## Discussion Questions

1. How has your past experience with giving (or discussions about giving) impacted your perspective on it?
2. What does it mean practically to "decide in your heart" regarding your giving? How can you cultivate this heart posture?
3. Can you recall a time when you gave "reluctantly or under compulsion"? How did that feel, and what did you learn from it?
4. What are specific ways you can foster a "cheerful" attitude towards giving, even when it feels challenging or inconvenient?

### **Closing Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your immeasurable generosity towards us, most profoundly in the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Soften our hearts, Lord, to understand that all we have comes from You. Teach us to give not out of obligation or reluctance, but with a cheerful and joyful spirit, reflecting Your own loving nature. May our acts of giving be true worship, bringing glory to Your name and advancing Your kingdom on earth. Amen.

### **Benediction**

Now unto Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Go forth, ready to give cheerfully, knowing that God loves you and delights in your generous heart. Amen.