

2010 CALIFORNIA MISSION OFFERING

How Should I Give to Reach California?

II Corinthians 8:1-9

By Pete Ramirez

I. Why should I give?

Because of the three instructions the Bible gives.

1. **The Bible demonstrates that we are to give to the needy**

Both in the New and Old Testaments we find various examples of how we ought to give to those in need. Let me share two places in the Bible where we find this principle of giving.

In the time of the Old Testament, the poor were allowed to eat from land that was idle in the Sabbath years; this was the practice of gleaning (Leviticus 25:1-7). When the fields were harvested, the corners of the fields and the crops dropped by the workers were reserved for the poor. In the New Testament, we also see an example of how we are to give: "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure – pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return" (Luke 6:38, NASB95).

There are numerous examples of how we should make provision for those in need, and we must remember that taking care of the needy has always been part of God's plan.

2. **The Bible demonstrates that the lost are the ones with the greatest need**

The Bible teaches that a man's soul is lost, starving, deathly sick and condemned to die. Man needs a Savior to find, cure and pardon him. A Savior is your greatest need because you can't save yourself.

Romans 3:9-18 describes just how lost we are, and man's great need for God. Some of the things Romans 3 reminds us about those who don't know Christ:

- All under the penalty of sin, v 9
- There are none righteous, v 10
- None with understanding, v 11
- None seeking God, v 11
- They have all turned from God, v 12
- None is good, v 12
- Deceiving with their mouths and an overall problem with their mouth, v 13-14
- Problem with violence and destruction, v 15-17
- No fear of God, so they prove themselves to be foolish and blind

Since the lost are the ones with the greatest need, we see that Jesus responds to their need.

From II Corinthians 8:1-9 we will see examples of how we are to give to reach the lost for Jesus. First we will see how Paul in his letter to the church of Corinth attempts to motivate the Corinthians to give because of what Jesus has demonstrated, and then to mimic the example of the Macedonian churches.

3. The Bible demonstrates that Jesus gave to reach the Lost

Three examples of how Jesus gave to reach the lost

1. Jesus gave humbly – v 9

“ ... though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor ... ” v 9

He became poor by becoming human. He left His divine, majestic state and became a physical human being. Willing to be humble, He was born in a stable and died on the cross, a vile man's death. Yes, He humbled Himself as a human being. While He lived as a human, He did not take advantage of His divine powers for His own purposes; instead He humbly depended on the Father, while at the same time He served and gave to others.

“ ... who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.” (Philippians 2:6, NASB95)

Not only did He give humbly by living as a human being, but He served humbly. He demonstrated His humility various times with both children and His disciples. He was humble to the point that He was willing to wash the disciples' feet.

“ ... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28, NASB95)

Paul, in his charge to the church in Corinth (II Corinthians 6:1-10), says we are to work together because of the grace, the salvation God has given us. In verse 10 he states:

“ ... as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.” (II Corinthians 6:10, NASB95)

Just as Christ gave so much for us to be made rich, we must do the same for others. The model of this type of humble living Paul describes was Jesus Himself – Jesus humbled Himself when He became man so that through Him we may become rich.

Vs 9c – “ ... so that you through His poverty might become rich.”

This leads us to His second example. Not only did He give humbly but He gave sacrificially.

2. Jesus gave sacrificially – v9

He was willing to give His life to offer salvation to the sinner so we may become rich when we obtain salvation.

He was not forced to give in this manner. The scripture in Isaiah describes Jesus as a sheep led to be slaughtered. Our Savior, without making a fuss, was willing to give His life to pay for my sin and your sin. He knew what sacrifice would mean for Him – it meant full surrender.

There is an old illustration of a pig and a chicken that wanted to donate to a feeding program for hungry children. The chicken told the pig, “I have an idea, I will provide the eggs and you provide the ham.” The chicken knew the cost of sacrifice and was unwilling to pay it.

When Jesus gave for us He gave sacrificially. He gave it all.

3. Jesus gave lovingly – v 9

The grace of God is the ultimate demonstration of His love and His favor bestowed on us.

The grace of God is the ultimate act of love. It is an unmerited, divine assistance given to humans for their salvation, regeneration and sanctification. The Bible says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8, NASB95).

Grace is a virtue coming from God. We must remember that it is a gift He has chosen to give us. He was not forced, but because of His love for us He gave it all. When we understand His grace it should motivate us to give.

So we understand that we should give to the needy. We understand that the lost are the ones with the greatest need. We saw how Jesus gave to reach us, the lost. But the question now remains:

II. How should I give?

Three examples of how the churches of Macedonia gave: they were multiple churches that joined together to give to a need Paul brought to their attention. These churches were in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea.

1. **They gave despite their affliction**

The Macedonian churches were persecuted churches in the northern part of Greece. Their homeland was one where the Romans plundered, wars had ravished and poverty was great. To add to their affliction, many of them would be laid off (fired) from their jobs because they became Christians. Not to mention, their own families would reject them for leaving their faith.

But despite their affliction they did not lose focus and responded to the need. They kept faithful to the task. This is what Paul says to the church in Philippi regarding their faithfulness: "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone" (Philippians 4:15, NASB95).

There are always excuses/afflictions we could come up with not to give, but this is not acceptable. We must stay on task! Don't be mistaken: we are not to feel afflicted because we have to give. We are not asked to give beyond our means, or asked to give huge amounts. Look what Paul writes: "For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality" (II Corinthians 8:12-13, NASB95).

We can see by these verses that we are not all required to give the same but we all should be ready and, when ready, give accordingly. According to what? It should be done according to your ability to give without being afflicted.

Here is a good way to evaluate what you have – you must first give God what is His, the tithe, your commitment of obedience to Him. Then provide for your family. After that

try something new, "SAVE." Make a plan for those savings to give a portion when the time comes to those in need or to special offerings. Dr. Robert Gallina, pastor of Green Hills Baptist Church in La Habra, always reminded the congregation, "God does not want equal amounts of money from us but He does desire equal sacrifice." Church, if Jesus sacrificed, we must voluntarily sacrifice as well.

2. **They gave despite their poverty**

"... Beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord ... " v 3

Now you might say, "But pastor, I am poor and don't have anything to give." Oh really? Look around you. We live in the richest country in the world. Look around. We have so much! Go to a third-world country and then tell me you are poor.

Luke 21:1-4 says, "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, 'Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.'"

Maybe you should ask yourself: "In my time of poverty does God want to use me like this poor widow? Am I holding back?"

Remember how Jesus gave. Christ gave up all His riches when He emptied Himself for the sake of the poor.

"... but He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." (Philippians 2:7, NASB95).

The Macedonian churches gave of themselves even in deep poverty. They allowed themselves to be used by God. They were willing to give it all and be emptied for the sake of helping those in need.

Will you give beyond your ability despite your affliction, despite your poverty, and this third reason?

3. **They gave because they loved**

This church gave out of love, not out of compulsion or manipulation. Nobody tried to intimidate them to do something they didn't want to do. Paul tells them in verse 8, *"I am not speaking this as a command,"* and in verse 10 he writes, *"I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage."* Paul in these verses is saying you have the liberty to give out of love, give the amount you want. It is not a fixed amount or percentage. Give out of the joy of the grace God has given you. Give out of the abundance of love God has placed in your heart.

We see the joy of the grace of God, the love that overflowed from the Macedonian churches. It says in verse 4 that they were *"begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints."*

Giving is optional but I believe it is a reflection of the maturity of believers and the understanding of God's love and His Grace. May God's love and Grace overflow in you!

"But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability" (II Corinthians 8:11, NASB95).

In this verse Paul gently calls the attention of the church in Corinth. Paul reminds them as he says,

"Look, you guys have already desired to help but you have not done it." He gently calls them to be ready to give and complete their sacrifice of love for the needy.

The need to reach California is great. Will you be ready to give, despite your affliction and poverty? Will you be willing to give because of the love and joy of God's grace in you? Church, be ready to give to save California!

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The California Mission Offering is inspired by S.G. Posey, a CSBC missionary pioneer.