

## 2 Cor 9:7-12

## “You Won’t Believe It Until You Try It”

There is a universal principal we must all remember. Don’t expect to receive what you do not give or stated this way, don’t be surprised when you get exactly what you have given. Jesus says it this way in **Luke 6:38** “Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” This principal can be applied to many, if not all, areas of our lives. It is a principal that is extremely challenging to live by because inherently humans are self-centered. And due to this fact, we, humans, must be taught how to be otherwise. How to be selfless. How to be content. How to be trusting. How to be generous. As it concerns these things experience is the only teacher. That is to say, though we may believe it is true we will never experience the blessing of it for ourselves until we try it. Generosity and the blessing that comes from it will not simply fall on us. We must embrace this spiritual practice and then and only then will we experience the blessing of it personally. You won’t believe it until you try it! It is my hope that today’s message will provide the final push we need to embrace this spiritual practice if we have not been compelled to do so up unto this point. So, three observations from our final text in our generosity series.

**First observation, Paul rids us of formulas. V7** “<sup>7</sup>You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” I have no issue with tithing. I believe tithing is a faithful practice and good place to start. However, the opportunity I see with

tithing is it is restrictive, narrow and it falls short of what it means to be generous. Tithing at best is formulaic and obligatory and only addresses a small facet on what we are to give. It doesn't move one to give from the heart but rather out of religious obligation. **Being generous cannot be achieved by following a formula. Generosity, as spiritual practice, moves one beyond formulas. Formulas lead to rote behavior not transformation. Generosity is transformative in nature and relational, not transactional.** Remember it is a matter of the heart. Tithe, I support it and we would certainly be healthier financially if everyone tithed, but if we want to be generous, I believe we must move beyond the 10% rule.

**Exodus 25:2** “Tell the people of Israel to bring me their sacred offerings. Accept the contributions from all whose hearts are moved to offer them.”

**Exodus 35:4-5, 20-21** “<sup>4</sup>Then Moses said to the whole community of Israel, “This is what the Lord has commanded: <sup>5</sup>Take a sacred offering for the Lord. Let those with generous hearts present the following gifts to the Lord:.... <sup>20</sup>So the whole community of Israel left Moses and returned to their tents. <sup>21</sup>All whose hearts were stirred and whose spirits were moved came and brought their sacred offerings to the Lord. They brought all the materials needed for the Tabernacle, for the performance of its rituals, and for the sacred garments.”

**2 Cor 8:11b-15** “Give in proportion to what you have. <sup>12</sup>Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have. <sup>13</sup>Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. <sup>14</sup>Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can

share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal.<sup>15</sup> As the Scriptures say, “Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough.””

**Second observation, God is the source of generous giving. V8-10**

“<sup>8</sup> And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. <sup>9</sup> As the Scriptures say, “They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.” <sup>10</sup> For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.” I hear someone thinking, “Can or will God actually do this if I buy in?” Well, you will never know until you try Him. The first step to taking the plunge is to acknowledge that what you have is because God has provided it. Yes, you worked hard, you saved, you invested wisely, you followed through on that idea, but God gave you life, health, intelligence, the wherewithal to get it done. Generosity requires a proper theology of ownership. Unfortunately, too many go to their grave believing that what they have acquired belongs to them. Believing they are the captain of their own ship only to realize on the other side that is the furthest thing from the truth.

**Luke 16:19-25** “<sup>19</sup> Jesus said, “There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed in purple and fine linen and who lived each day in luxury.<sup>20</sup> At his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores. <sup>21</sup> As Lazarus lay there longing for scraps from the rich man’s table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores. <sup>22</sup> “Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the heavenly banquet. The rich man also died and was buried, <sup>23</sup> and he went to the place of the dead. There, in torment, he

saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side. <sup>24</sup> “The rich man shouted, ‘Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.’ <sup>25</sup> “But Abraham said to him, ‘Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish.”

**1 John 3:17-19** <sup>17</sup> “If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. <sup>19</sup> Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.”

**Third and final observation. Being generous will bless you, bless others and glorify God. V11-12** <sup>11</sup> “Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. <sup>12</sup> So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God.” I was struck by what I learned Paul was saying here. The Greek word for enriched is *ploutizo* and here it means to make rich, literally. When we are generous with our possessions God gives us even more so that we can continue be generous, supplying for our needs and the needs of others. God makes us richer, not for our own comfort or luxury, but for the benefit of His Church. And the reason this leads to God’s glory is because God’s people, the giver and the receiver, take no credit but give God the glory. That is to say, we refuse to say I did it or I deserved it.

**1 Sam 2:6-7** “The Lord gives both death and life; he brings some down to the grave but raises others up. <sup>7</sup>The Lord makes some poor and others rich; he brings some down and lifts others up.”

**1 Chron 29:11-13** “<sup>11</sup>Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. <sup>12</sup>Wealth and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion people are made great and given strength.<sup>13</sup> “O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name!”

Church, you won't believe until you try it. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.