

# **A MODEL FIRST CENTURY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

**- Stewardship as revealed in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 -**

**Spiritual Growth Seminar  
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- Stewardship as revealed in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 -

## **Purpose**

To give the Holy Spirit of God the opportunity to teach us and to apply to our own hearts--from a study of God's holy Word--some basic truths about a Christian's stewardship of his treasures.

To encourage us to be more faithful, committed, joyful stewards of all that our God has given to us.

## **Overview**

- Session #1: What is *Christian* Stewardship?
- Session #2: Stewardship Encouragement (2 Corinthians 8:1-15)
- Session #3: Stewardship Leadership (2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5)
- Session #4 Stewardship Blessings (2 Corinthians 9:6-15)

## **Session #1: What Is Christian Stewardship?**

Comment on the following definitions of Christian stewardship. What are their strengths? Their weaknesses? Which one(s) do you prefer? Why?

- ⇒ Stewardship is managing God's mission with God's resources.
- ⇒ Stewardship is a believer's response to divine truth.
- ⇒ Stewardship is what I do after I say, "I believe."
- ⇒ Stewardship is using what God has made of us and what he has given us out of love for him.
- ⇒ Stewardship is the practice of the Christian religion.
- ⇒ Stewardship is the action of the indwelling Christ.
- ⇒ Stewardship is an interpretation of the Christian meaning of life as a whole.

- ⇒ Stewardship is a living expression of one's faith in Christ crucified.
- ⇒ Stewardship is the natural consequence of an experience with God, the natural reaction of the human heart that has been touched by the divine Spirit.
- ⇒ Stewardship-in the broad sense-is sanctification.

**Truth #1: A Proper Understanding of Christian Stewardship Begins with the Understanding That Stewardship Is [a Part of] the Christian's Life of Sanctification**

- **Sanctification:**

"The new life, both of the heart and of the conduct, effected in regeneration"

"A medicinal act of God performed in the heart of man, which produces an *inherent* habitual righteousness," as compared with justification, which is "a declaratory act of God performed *outside* of man, which imputes to man a *foreign* righteousness"

**Truth #2: Sanctification, because of the lingering presence of the Old Man, is unlike justification, which is instant and complete. Sanctification is a process and is always incomplete (Luther: The Christian is *simul justus et peccator*, "at the same time righteous and a sinner")**

- **The Way the Scriptures Describe the Old Man**

Ephesians 4:22      What motivates the Old Man (cf. also 1 John 2:15)?

1 Corinthians 2:14      Why is the Old Man unwilling and unable to accept what God says?

Romans 8:7-8      What is the attitude of the Old Man toward God?  
What can't it do?

Romans 7:22-23      Why is peaceful existence between the Old Man and the New Man impossible (cf. also Galatians 5:17)?

- **The Effect of the Old Man upon Stewardship**

⇒ The Old Man would change 1 Corinthians 10:31 to read, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of self."

⇒ The Old Man does not ask, "What can I do for others?" but "What's in it for me?"

⇒ The Old Man loves Mammon rather than God.

⇒ The Old Man is

- ◆ greedy
- ◆ covetous
- ◆ idolatrous
- ◆ envious
- ◆ this world minded
- ◆ self-centered
- ◆ materialistic
- ◆ more concerned about getting than giving
- ◆ selfish
- ◆ desirous of self-glory

⇒ The Old Man cannot produce a *Christian* stewardship response.

Whatever motivates the non-Christian to be a careful manager of his time, his abilities, his money also motivates the Old Man of the Christian.

What are some non-Christian stewardship motives?

● **The Way the Scriptures Describe the New Man**

2 Corinthians 5:17    What has the New Man become?

Ephesians 4:24    How do the Scriptures describe the New Man of the Christian (cf. also Colossians 3:10)?

Romans 6:6-7    To what is the New Man no longer a slave?

Romans 7:22    How does the New Man feel about God's will?

● **The Effect of the New Man upon Stewardship**

⇒ The New Man says, "Whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do, I want to do it all to the glory of God."

⇒ The New Man does not ask, "What's in it for me?" but "What can I do for others?"

⇒ The New Man loves God rather than Mammon.

⇒ The New Man is

- ◆ generous
- ◆ content
- ◆ satisfied
- ◆ spiritual-minded
- ◆ God-centered
- ◆ more concerned about giving than getting

- ◆ desirous of God's glory, rather than self glory.

⇒ The New Man can produce only a *Christian* stewardship response.

**Truth #3: Growth in sanctification, hence also in Christian stewardship, occurs as the New Man gains ascendancy over the Old Man. Such growth is effected through a proper use of law and gospel.**

- **Purpose of the Law**

Romans 3:20 For what purpose did God give us his Law?

Romans 6:23 With what does God's Law threaten the sinner?

- **The Law's Effect on Christian Stewardship**

⇒ The Law can never, with all its commands, threats, and promises, produce a single good work. The Old Man can only be put to death, not reformed

⇒ The Law can never, therefore, produce the good work of Christian stewardship.

⇒ The Law can--and should--be used to point to specific sins that militate against sound stewardship practices, e.g., greed, covetousness, materialism (cf. Luke 12:13-21).

⇒ The Law also serves the purpose of guiding grateful Christians in their lives as stewards (3rd use of the law).

- **Purpose of the Gospel**

Matthew 9:13 What does the Gospel announce and convey to the sinner?

1 Peter 1:23 What does God bring about through the Gospel?

John 15:5 What does the Gospel produce and empower (cf. also Galatians 2:20)?

- **The Gospel's Effect on Christian Stewardship**

⇒ Produces an "I *will*" rather than an "I *must*" attitude toward stewardship (cf. Luke 19:1-10).

⇒ Produces generous, even lavish, displays of Christ-honoring love (cf. Luke 7:36-50; John 12:1-9).

**Truth #4: God-Pleasing Stewardship Motivation Flows from the Gospel, not the Law**

● ***What Is Motivation?***

Motivation is an incentive; that which incites to action.

All behavior is motivated, but not all behavior is properly motivated.

● ***What Is Gospel motivation?***

Complete the following sentences:

Romans 12:1-2      Gospel-motivated behavior is behavior that

1 John 4:19      Gospel-motivated behavior is behavior that

2 Corinthians 5:15      Gospel motivated behavior is behavior that

- **Summary: There is only one foundational motivation for a Christian's life of sanctification, hence for Christian stewardship: Christ's love for the world as displayed by his living for us and dying for us. This love of God in Christ is the heart and center of the Gospel (cf John 3:16).**

*For Reflection and Discussion*

1. Agree or disagree? Christians give because they love Jesus.
2. Comment on the following:
  - Sentence in a sermon or newsletter: "It's because of your greed and selfishness that we are running a deficit in our budget."
  - Christ said, "Go and make disciples." He didn't say, "Go and raise money."
  - We need to avoid telling members to work *for* the church; we should be teaching them as the church.
  - Christian stewardship does not consist in raising money, but in raising people.
3. How would you define *Christian* stewardship?

## Session #2: Stewardship Encouragement (2 Corinthians 8:1-15)

### The Setting

*1 Corinthians 16:1-4:* <sup>1</sup> Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. <sup>3</sup> Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 Paul focuses on the need to *complete* the offering for the needy saints in Jerusalem, The offering had been begun about a year before but had been "put on the back burner," evidently because of problems plaguing the congregation. As Paul encourages the completion of this offering, he places before the Corinthians and us some key principles of stewardship, principles that can guide individual Christians and Christian congregations yet today.

### Introduction

Note in what follows the various ways by which Paul encourages the Corinthians to exercise responsible Christian stewardship to help their fellow believers in Jerusalem:

- He appeals to the example of their brothers and sisters in Macedonia
- He reminds them of their own good beginning
- He points them to the grace of Christ
- He urges them: Finish the work

### 8:1-5 The Example of the Churches in Macedonia

*<sup>1</sup> And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. <sup>2</sup> Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. <sup>3</sup> For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, <sup>4</sup> they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. <sup>5</sup> And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.*

8:1-2 "Macedonian churches," at least the congregations in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea

What could have made giving very difficult for the Christians in Macedonia?

Yet how is their giving described?

How was it possible for them to give like this?

8:3-5 In what three ways does Paul describe the remarkable nature of the giving of the Macedonians?

v. 3 -

v. 4 -

v. 5 -

### 8:6-7 The Beginning Made by the Corinthians Themselves

*<sup>6</sup> So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. <sup>7</sup> But just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

8:6 Titus "had earlier made a beginning" - See 1 Cor 16:1-4. Titus was likely the one who had brought 1 Corinthians to Corinth on Paul's behalf.

"act of grace" - God's gift of grace to them led them to respond with a gift of grace to others

8:7 Why is Paul quite certain that the Corinthians will now complete the gathering of this offering?

### 8:8-9 The Grace of Jesus

*<sup>8</sup> I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. <sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

8:8 Why does Paul say, "I am not commanding you"?

Why has Paul brought up the example of the Macedonian believers?

8:9 The fifth time that the word "grace" has appeared in these few verses!

What does it mean that Jesus was rich?

How did Jesus become poor?

What are the riches we receive through his poverty?



### 8:10-15 An Appeal to Complete the Offering

<sup>10</sup> And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. <sup>11</sup> Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. <sup>12</sup> For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

<sup>13</sup> Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. <sup>14</sup> At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, <sup>15</sup> as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."

8:10 What two praiseworthy things does Paul mention about the Corinthians?

8:11-12 What key principles of giving do we find in these verses?

8:13-14 "that there might be equality" - The "plenty" the Gentile Christians were supplying to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem was, of course, this offering of money. What was the "plenty" the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were providing to the Gentile Christians?

8:15 A quotation from Exodus 16:18 which speaks of gathering manna in the wilderness. The point: God will provide. Rich and poor alike can trust that God will take care of them. You won't give yourself into the poor-house!

#### *For Reflection and Discussion*

1. 8:1-5 What can we learn about giving from the example of the Macedonians?

2. 8:7 Why is it most appropriate to speak of the "grace of giving"?

Where does all Christian giving begin?

3. 8:8 Agree or Disagree? It is proper to motivate giving by providing people with an opportunity to see what others are giving.

4. 8:9 What does the message of this verse have to do with our giving?

How can people be led to look upon giving as a blessing rather than a burden?

5. 8:11 "Finish the work." Agree or disagree? It is proper for the church to command giving.

- 6 8:11-12 "The gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have." What do these words say about small offerings? about large offerings?

Agree or Disagree? The church should more actively pursue large gifts than small gifts.

Agree or Disagree? These verses encourage tithing.

### **Summary of 2 Corinthians 8:1-15**

In encouraging the Corinthian church to complete gathering the offering for the believers in Jerusalem, Paul sets before them the example of the Macedonian Christians. He also appeals to the example which Jesus himself set. What Christ did, though, is more than an example. It is *the* motivation for Christian giving, as it is for every other aspect of the Christian's life of sanctification.

### Session #3 Stewardship Leadership (2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5)

#### Introduction

In 8:1-15 Paul pointed the Corinthians to the example of their Macedonian brothers and sisters as well as to the perfect example of Jesus, who for their sakes became poor that they might become rich. In the section before us, Paul speaks about those whom he has chosen to assist in the gathering of this offering and once again underscores the urgency of completing the offering.

#### 8:16-24 The Plan to Send Titus and the Two "Brothers"

*16 I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. 17 For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. 18 And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. 19 What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. 20 We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. 21 For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.*

8:16 Titus: A trusted companion of Paul, who had probably brought 1 Corinthians to the Corinthians

What made Titus a good choice to be the one to go to Corinth and help the Corinthians finish gathering this offering for the believers in Jerusalem?

8:17 How did Titus feel about being asked to participate in this stewardship endeavor?

8:18-19 "the brother" - Who he is we aren't told. But what is meant by "brother"?

What two qualifications does this "brother" possess?

What is the purpose of this offering for the Jerusalem believers?

8:20-21 Why is Paul so careful in his choice of men to accompany him when he brings the offering to Jerusalem?

*22 In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. 23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. 24 Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.*

8:22 A second "brother," name unknown, to accompany Titus to Corinth. Why will the Corinthians welcome him when he comes?

8:23-24 What "letters of recommendation" do these men bring with them?

Titus:

The two "brothers":

### *For Reflection and Discussion*

1. 8:16-24 What do these verses teach us about proper criteria in choosing leaders for a congregation's stewardship program?
2. 8:19 What is the primary purpose of our offerings (cf. also Proverbs 3:9)?
3. 8:20-21 What steps might congregational leaders take to reduce the risk of being criticized for the way they handle the church's offerings?

### **9:1-5 The Urgency of Completing The Offering**

*1 There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. 2 For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. 3 But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we – not to say anything about you – would be ashamed of having been so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.*

9:1 "There is no need for me to write...about this service to the saints" Why not?

Then why does Paul write about it anyway?

What does Paul call the offering in this verse?

9:2 "Achaia" - the province where Corinth was, an indication that the gospel had spread beyond Corinth (cf 2 Corinthians 1:1; Athens, Acts 17; Cenchrea, Romans 16:1)

How had the Corinthians served as an example for the Macedonians? (for the way the Macedonians had been an example for the Corinthians recall 8:1-5)

9:3-5 "The brothers" - cf. 8:16-24

Why, though Paul says there is no need to write about the offering, is he sending these three men to Corinth?

What indication do we have in these verses that Paul is interested more in the attitude of the Corinthians than in the amount of the gift?

*For Reflection and Discussion*

1. 9:1 Having said, "There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints," Paul proceeds to do just that. What does this teach us?
2. 9:2 One important thing members of the Body of Christ can do for each other is to encourage one another (cf Hebrews 10:24-25; also compare 8:1-5). How can we do this in the matter of giving?
3. 9:4 Agree or disagree? Shame is a good motivator for giving.

**Summary of 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5**

Paul, taking great care to avoid anything that might lay him open to charges of impropriety in handling the offerings of the saints, selected other reputable Christians to work with him in gathering the offering. Tactfully, he sends three of these men, one of whom was Titus, ahead to Corinth to help them bring to completion what they had started a year previously.

## Session #4 Stewardship Blessings (2 Corinthians 9:6-15)

### Introduction

In this final part of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul speaks of four specific blessings God attaches to generous, whole-hearted giving:

- The giver is blessed
- People are helped
- God is glorified
- Bonds of Christian fellowship are strengthened

Christians don't give in order to be blessed; but God does assure his children that when they go his way—also in the stewardship of giving—his blessings will follow.

### 9:6-11 The Giver Is Blessed

<sup>6</sup> Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever." <sup>10</sup> Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup> You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

9:6 What promise does God attach to generous giving (cf also Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:10-12)?

9:7 How should the Corinthians determine how much to give?

What might lead them to give "reluctantly" or "under compulsion"?

9:8-11 How can one afford to give generously?

"He" (v 9) = the grateful believer. A quotation from Psalm 112, which speaks of the grateful believer responding to God's generosity by generously sharing these gifts with others

### **9:12-13 People Are Helped and God Is Glorified**

*12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.*

Two further blessed results of this service for the saints:

The needs of God's people (in Jerusalem) will be supplied (9:12a)

The Jerusalem believers will praise and thank God for this expression of Christian love on the part of the Corinthians (9:12b-13)

### **9:14-15 Bonds of Christian Fellowship Are Strengthened**

*14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

9:14 Another blessed result: The bond of faith between the Jerusalem believers, largely Jews, and the believers in Asia Minor and Greece, largely Gentiles, will be greatly strengthened

9:15 What is this indescribable gift of God? cf 8:9

#### *For Reflection and Discussion*

1. 9:6 Agree or Disagree? It is proper to tell God's people that if they give, God will give to them.
2. 9:6 Agree or Disagree? True Christian giving is sacrificial in nature.
3. 9:7 Agree or Disagree? A passage such as this suggests the value of "pledging" offerings (cf. also 9:5, "the generous gift you had promised").  
  
Agree or Disagree? It is wrong for a church to suggest to its members how much to give.
4. 9:12-14 Note how the same blessed results occur today when we cheerfully give from what God has given to us.
5. From our study of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9:
  - Why would Paul spend two chapters talking about the stewardship of money without ever mentioning the word money?

- Should pastors today preach about money?
- Are stewardship programs necessary?
- Is it proper to focus a stewardship program on needs?
- Where does the church budget fit into stewardship?

Comment on this statement: "If all of us would increase our giving by just 1%, we would be able to balance the budget."

6. Go back over the two chapters of 2 Corinthians we worked through in sessions 2-4, gather as many principles for giving that you can find in these chapters, and list them below:



**Stewardship Thoughts in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9:**

- All giving begins with the grace of God who loves us when we don't deserve it (8:1, 9)
- Christian giving is a gift of God (8:1)
- Christian giving is a privilege (8:4)
- Poverty, even extreme poverty, does not hinder Christian giving (8:2)
- God is pleased when Christians give themselves first to him, and then their money (8:5)
- The example of the attitude of others can serve as an incentive for Christian giving (8:1-5, 8; 9:2))
- Christians will want to excel in the grace of giving as much as they want to excel in every aspect of their life of sanctification (8:7)
- God looks for offerings that are according to what we have (proportionate giving) (8:11-12)
- God looks for willing giving (8:12; 9:5,7)
- God does not expect us to give to him what we need to provide for our own needs (8:13-15)
- God wants the church to choose its stewardship leadership with care (8:16-19,22-23)
- God desires that those who handle money in the church be above reproach (8:20-21)
- God desires that the church accept its stewardship workers (8:24)
- Christians worship God with their offerings (8:19)
- Christians demonstrate their concern for one another with their offerings (8:19; 9:1-2)
- Christians have the responsibility to encourage one another in the grace of giving (9:3-5)
- God promises to bless a cheerful giver (9:6,8-10)
- God wants Christians to plan their giving (9:7)
- God is glorified through the offerings of his people (9:13)
- Bonds of Christian fellowship are strengthened as Christians supply the needs of their fellow Christians (9:14)

**Excerpt from People's Bible commentary on Second Corinthians:**

*Why* do Christians give? Through their giving Christians

- worship God
- help to alleviate the spiritual and physical needs of others
- inspire others to thank and praise God
- serve as an example for others to emulate
- express their fellowship with the brothers and sisters in Christ who benefit from the offerings.

*How* do Christians give? Christians

- look upon giving as a privilege, not a chore
- give cheerfully, not reluctantly or under compulsion
- give proportionately, from what God has given to them
- trust God to supply what they need
- value the example others set and seek to be positive examples themselves
- welcome the guidance and encouragement of their Christian brothers and sisters in the matter of giving, just as they do in every other aspect of their life of sanctification
- rejoice to work together with their fellow Christians in using their offerings jointly for God's glory and the advancement of his Kingdom.