

# Coach House Church

# BEACONS

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## GENEROSITY

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18TH JUNE 2021

Generosity is one of those virtues that we all know is good to have. But how can we know how much to give? It says in the bible we should give 10% but is that 10% before tax or after tax? Should we take out vital expenses first? How do we know we are doing it right?

The same could be said of anything we could be generous with. How do we know we are giving enough of our time or emotional energy to church or to other good causes? What do we do if we're not giving enough?

As with all questions in life the bible is a great place to look. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 says "Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided to give in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." It's key that we read from this passage that all of us should give. Whether it be a lot or a little, it is good for us to give to God's work.

The first question that popped out at me from this passage was what do we sow and what will we reap? To answer the first half of the question we have to look at the context that Paul was writing in. This letter was to a church he began in Corinth but had to leave due to persecution. He had already written them other letters, one being 1 Corinthians which was a harsh judgement of lots of things they were doing wrong. This second letter is more a letter of praise for correcting their behaviour with some requests. One request from Paul was that they prepare a financial offering for the poor in Jerusalem. This verse comes in the midst of that request.

So it is clear here that Paul is talking of giving money, though I think it could be applied in other contexts. So does that mean that prosperity gospel preachers, people that preach that God will bless you financially the more you give and are right with Him, does this mean they are right? Not at all!

When you plant a seed, what you reap is not the seed. It's always a different form to what you have sown. So I believe we reap something that isn't necessarily money.

Paul gives a bit of a clue at the end of this passage. He says that "God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." We will have all we need, not necessarily all we want. And on top of that we will abound in every good work. So giving generously helps us to become more like Christ and that improves how we can live for God. We will also be rewarded in heaven for anything we give on this earth. We will never be able to outgive our most generous God.

So, we should be generous and give what we can. But please don't misunderstand me. We shouldn't give more than we can afford. We are to be good stewards of what God has given us, so that means paying for the things we have to pay for to look after our bodies and those that we have been given to care for. For example, if we have a job we have a certain amount of responsibility to that job. And we probably need that job to pay for a mortgage and food for us and our families. If we decide to keep not going to our job or missing out tasks in order to do things for church, if we are giving our time too generously to church, we need to have a serious look at what we're doing. We need to be careful to look after what God has given us. This same passage in 2 Corinthians reinforces this. In chapter 8:12 it says "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have." We need to not give outside our means. This includes the precious resources of our time and emotional energy. We need to make sure we look after ourselves to make sure we can continue to look after others.

After all, nothing that we have, no gifts or money, are truly ours. All of it has been gifted from God. Yes, we may have had to do a bit of work along the way but our talents that allowed us to earn the money or the seed of a talent that we have worked to develop, originally came from God. Where we were born and our ability to be educated is a God given gift and we should appreciate that.

However, if we don't have much to give, we should be honest about that. There is a story in the bible of a couple that weren't honest about it. There was a guy in the early church called Ananias. He and his wife sold a field and brought some of the money to Peter. The problem was that he came boasting that it was all the money. Because he lied to the Holy Spirit, God struck him dead on the spot. His wife Sapphira made the same choice and faced the same fate. If we are ever asked how much we give, we need to be careful to be honest about it. We don't have to tell others how much we give, and quite honestly if we don't tell others it is better for us. But if the situation occurs where someone has to know, be honest about it.

The passage also says that we should give cheerfully. The word in Greek is "hilaros". This is the only place in the New Testament that this word is used and it is where we get the word hilarious from. So we should be happy to give, just as a farmer is happy to sow seed, because of what will come out of it. In giving we get to be a part of God's work and see the money used better than we could ever use it on our own.

Now I realise that I haven't answered the questions I asked at the beginning about how much exactly we should give. And that's because God doesn't want to give us a prescribed one size fits all for all time sort of answer. God wants you to give because you are grateful to Him and because you see the benefit of giving for yourself and those around you. He wants you to give what you can afford and be a faithful steward to the things that He has lent you. He wants you to give whatever He is leading you to give. So go and spend some time with Him and find out His heart for what you should give.



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