

## 5 Valuable Lessons from Paul on the Benefits of Giving



Giving impacts how effective a church will be in reaching out to the local community and into the world beyond. Our tithes and offerings can turn into rich blessings for others.

While I learned this truth early in my Christian walk, I have to admit that it took me a while to embrace doing it. Studying what the Apostle Paul wrote in his letters opened my eyes to the potential benefits of giving for everyone involved.

Paul urged his readers to make giving a natural and regular part of their Christian walk. He saw it as a way for believers to care for each other and to stay unified in purpose. Not only that, Paul understood the importance righteous giving has on a Christian's future. The teachings of Jesus, such as this one from Luke, were never far from his thoughts:

'Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' (Luke 12:32-34)

### Paul's Inspiration for Being a Generous Giver

Paul lifted up Jesus' life and ministry as the ultimate example of giving.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Paul wanted his readers to see Jesus' motivations for giving:

His love for God and for us

His compassion for our needs

His desire to share what He has

The Apostle hoped that by seeing this model, believers would feel inspired as he did to look at giving not as a burden, but an opportunity to become more Christlike. Paul's letters modeled what it looks like to "live to give."

From him, I've learned five important lessons that have changed my attitudes and actions toward giving.

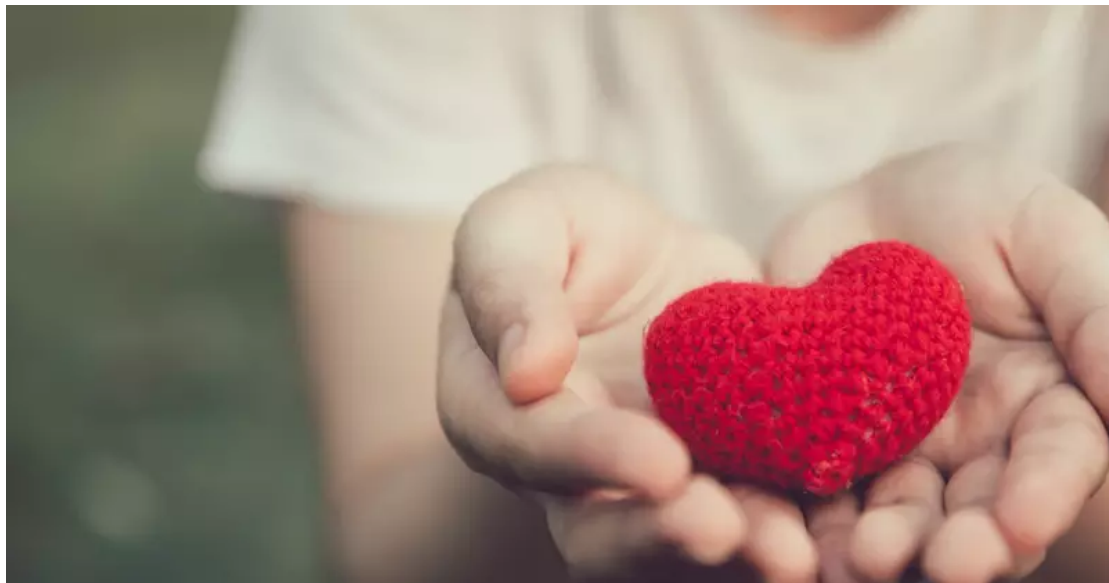
## **Lesson #1: God's Blessings Equip Us To Give To Others**

It's said that we are meant to be streams of blessing, not reservoirs. To be a better giver, it helps to remember how much we already have. Paul's desire was for us to lift up thanks to God, then to ask Him if there's anything He wants us to pass forward. Doing that helps meet a need, and keeps us from holding onto our possessions too tightly.

"...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." (2 Corinthians 9:8)

"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share." (1 Timothy 6:17-18)

"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. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." (Corinthians 9:10-11)



## **Lesson #2: The Act of Giving Is More Important Than the Amount**

Jesus commended the poor widow who gave a small offering to the church treasury, because she gave out of what little she had. Paul asks us to let regular giving become one of our "holy habits," whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. The important thing is to decide to do what we can, when we can.

Then we can watch how God multiplies our gift.

"In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability." (2 Corinthians 8:2-3)

"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made." (1 Corinthians 16:2)

"For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have." (2 Corinthians 8:12)

### **Lesson #3: Having the Right Attitude About Giving Matters to God**

The preacher Charles Spurgeon wrote, "Giving is true loving." Paul felt joyful about offering his whole life to serve others physically and spiritually, and reminds us that tithing should come out of a humble and hopeful heart. Our tributes need to be driven not by guilt, attention-seeking, or any other reason but a true desire to show God's mercy.

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

"If it is giving, then give generously..." (Romans 12:8)

"if I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:3)



### **Lesson #4: The Habit of Giving Changes Us for the Better**

Paul had seen the transforming effect tithing had on believers who made giving a priority. As we sincerely give to His causes, God will do a wonderful work within our hearts while He ministers around us.

We will become more God-centered.

...in everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' (Acts 20:35)

We will continue to grow in empathy and mercy.

"But since you excel in everything - in face, in speech, in knowledge, incomplete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you - see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others." (2 Corinthians 8:7)

We will gain contentment with what we have.

"For the Love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, I have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." (1 Timothy 6:10)



## **Lesson #5: Giving Should Be an Ongoing Activity**

With time, giving can become a lifestyle for individuals and congregations. Paul tried to keep his young churches strong in this vital work by acknowledging, encouraging, and challenging them.

If we pray, God will make us able to persevere through any fatigue or discouragement until giving is a source of joy, whether or not we see the results.

"Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that you're eager willingness to do may be matched by your completion of it..." (2 Corinthians 8:10-11)

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." (Galatians 6:9-10)

"...we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along." (Galatians 2:10)

The first few times I read through Paul's journeys, I was put off by all the hardships he endured. I wondered how anyone could find contentment in giving so much. But I clearly see now how much his desire to follow Jesus compelled him to "pour himself out." I hope that in my own way I can take on his generous spirit and joyful heart. I hope that for you, too.

"Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." (Romans 12:13)