

FTBC

GROWTH TRACKS


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Welcome to Growth Tracks which is FBC's program designed to set the disciple on the firm foundation spiritual maturity.


In 2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) Paul writes "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

The key to growth in our spiritual lives is encountering the glory of God through the person of His Son who is His perfect image. The more our hearts are filled with the knowledge of Him the more our characters are moulded, the more our hearts are filled with His love and more our lives will be directed towards the purpose for which we were created....to glorify Him. Each chapter is designed to provide a progressive track to show the face of Christ through selected but key passages in the Bible laying down the bed rock foundations of faith that will form the basis for a life -long learning and growing in to the likeness of Christ. Prayerfully follow these chapters and His Spirit will propel you into a trajectory of robust growth and spiritual transformation. Learn how to read the bible by tackling whole passages of Scripture rather than piece meal verses. See how principles from the passages will be translated to everyday life. For those disciples going into the Gamma program these presentations will help bridge the gap between the Alpha Beta programs and the more in- depth Gamma discipleship program.

For those who prefer to listen and see the contents of this book you can go to our website at [www.fbc.com .my](http://www.fbc.com.my) and each chapter will be presented in a series of slides at the resources section of our site under the title "Growth Tracks"



MODULE 15



**FINANCIAL FRUITFULNESS -
PART 2**

In this study we will discuss the blessings of Christian giving and it is taken from 2-Corinthians 9:1-15. The following verses sets the scene, verse 1-5, Paul is coming over to collect the offering. He is going to bring some of the Macedonian people with him and he doesn't want anybody to be embarrassed, he wants everybody to be ready with the gift. So he is writing ahead of time to tell them to collect the gift.

2 Corinthians 9:1 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, 2 for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated- to say nothing of you- for being so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction

So Paul is sending people ahead of time so that they will arrange to have the gift collected, tabulated and ready for transportation rather than soliciting for the collection at the time of his arrival as it would put them under pressure to give against their will. His suggestion of having the collection well ahead of his arrival would send a clear sign that it was done willingly and not as an exception.

So this passage has four points and tells us about the blessings and characteristics of Christian giving.

1. It is your investment in God's Kingdom (v6,9-11)
2. It is entirely voluntary, deliberately done and it is done cheerfully (v7)
3. It is a worship multiplier, it really multiplies worship to God (v 11-13 ,15)
4. It promotes Christian fellowship (v14)

So the main passage is verses 6-15.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 (ESV) The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

1. IT IS YOUR INVESTMENT IN GOD'S KINGDOM (V6,9-11)

2 Corinthians 9:6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully...10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

So these are the few verses on which we get the first principle. Verse 6 tells us about the correspondence. So this is like investing, there is a principle of correspondence. So whatever one puts into the effort, there will be a corresponding output. So verse 6 is what we will do. This is our input. This is what we invest. If we sow

sparingly, we will reap sparingly. So Christian giving is like us planting seeds. The more seeds we plant; the more harvest we will gain. This talks about our investment. Christian giving is an investment by faith that whatever we put in, will actually result in something of a harvest.

The second part is the return on your investment. What we put in will result in what comes out.

10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

So when you put your investment of Christian giving in, God will supply and not only supply, he will multiply your seed and increase your harvest. So there is a doubling or tripling or increase of whatever you've put in.

So if you look very closely it is actually when we give money to Christian work, it is actually not our money, God is the one who supplies us. Using a farming metaphor, the sower doesn't own the seed, God owns the seed. He is the one that gives us the seed, so that we could actually sow this out or invest this out for him. What would we get in return? God will multiply and supply. So we will get resupplied, not with the same amount but even more than what we have put in and the corresponding investment, the harvest on our investment. You will be enriched in every way in verse 11. The principle is God will resupply money or physical resources more than what we have actually given him.

So you might be thinking, that's cool. But why does God give you actually more than what you've put in? Is it so that we become rich and be full of God's blessing and so therefore prosperity is our purpose. No, if you look very carefully in the verse, it says, he will multiply your seed for sowing. Verse 11,

11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way,

So when God resupplies our money or physical resources, so that we will be in a position to give even more. Distortion of this doctrine is that we actually give in order to get rich. So people come to church, they put money in and they take these promises and they distort it and they think if I put 10 dollars in God will give me 50 dollars and then I will be rich because there will be a profit over whatever I've put in. If you put in \$10 and God gives you \$50, which means you are able to give far more than what you were previously able to give. So it is actually generosity. God will resupply money and physical resources, so that we will be in position to give even more. This is not a scheme to get rich, this is a scheme so that we will be able to actually give more. That is the purpose of God's resupply.

Now there is also a second reason why God gives us more. God gives us more so that:

1. We will be able to give more and become more generous.
2. He will increase our harvest of righteousness.

Here we actually have it, God will resupply money or physical resources, so that we will be in a position to give even more and in that way bear much fruit to glorify him.

So let's illustrate this. It is actually God who provides money to us. When God provides money and resources to us we have two ways in which we deal with it.

1. We hang on to our money.

2. We give away our money.

If we hang on to our money and live to please ourselves, that's sinful. But if you were living in obedience to God and we are actually reflecting God's given character which is righteousness, we are actually reaping a harvest of righteousness because we are acting like the true sons of God that we actually are, the adopted sons of God. We are going to be behaving as if we actually belong to God. We are acting in a righteous manner and the manner that gives money away for God's glory.

Christian giving is your investment in the kingdom. First of all, as far as giving is concerned, God gives us the money, so that we could invest it. We take the money that God gives us and we give it away and in this case we will actually gain two things.

1. We will meet a need. We will bless other people and fulfill their needs.
2. We will bear fruit to please God and that is basically a harvest of righteousness, because the only way we can please God is by righteous behavior that reflects the fact that we are children of God. In this way, when God gives us physical resources of money, it makes us into his partners.

Renowned reformer Martin Luther said, "I have had many things in my hands that I lost; the things that I placed in the hands of God I still possess."

What Martin Luther means is that, he has lost a lot of money and things and spending it on all sorts of things and pleasures in life, but whatever money he gave away he actually placed it in the hands of God and God records that. That's the harvest of righteousness. That is something that God will not forget and God will reward us accordingly.

Matthew 25 is a passage which Jesus describes the judgment that we will face in the last days. Basically there will be the unrighteous and then the righteous people of God and Jesus says

37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

The bottom-line is that, when you actually have faith, faith will express itself in practical works and this is the people of God at the last days, they would have shown evidence of their faith by using their physical resources, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick in prison and helping others. So using their physical resources. So therefore, Christian giving is a reflection or expression of our faith. It is expected of us.

Let's look at some examples. There was a boy who lived in United States 200 years ago. He had to leave his father's house because his father could not afford to keep him. When he was only 16 years old and he carried all his worldly belongings in his knapsack and had no skills nor money when he met a canal boat captain who listened to his tale. The only skill that this boy had was the skill to make candles and soap. The captain actually got him down on his knees and said, let me pray with you. He prayed with him and getting up he told him, one day someone will soon be the leading soap-makers of New York and it can be you as well as anyone else only be a good man give your heart to Jesus give the Lord all that belongs to Him of every dollar you make, make an honest soap, give a full pound and I am sure you will be prosperous and rich. He actually took this to heart. He arrived in NY and had trouble finding a job but listened to the old man's advice. He found a church dedicated his life to Christ and started worshipping

there and the first thing he did with the first dollar he earned he gave away 10%. He soon started giving 20% and more till at late in life he gave 100%. This man's name was William Colgate, responsible for all the Colgate soap that we use to brush our teeth, famous. God materially blessed him more, so that he could continue to bless others.

James L Kraft is the originator of Kraft cheese. He gives 25% of his income to the Christian causes over many years and he actually said, "The only investment I ever made which has paid consistently increasing dividends is the money I have given to the Lord."

Richard Wurmbbrand was a pastor tortured for Christ. When he was in jail, he was nearly starved to death, was given one slice of bread a week and one bowl of dirty soup every day. Every 10th day he gave one bowl of soup to a weaker brother and every 10th week he gave one slice of bread to another, even in prison.

The distortion today is prosperity gospel, which tells us that God wants you to be rich, which means God will materially bless you, so you could fill your bank account and live in luxury. God is like your poker machine, you put money in, you get money out. So that actually is a distortion of what scripture says.

2. IT IS ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY, DELIBERATE AND DONE CHEERFULLY

7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing

So let's look closely to verse 7. When you actually embark on Christian giving, it is going to be done in a determined fashion. You have got to decide in your heart. It can't be done on a whim, you can't take spare change in your pocket and give that. You've got to decide what portion of your income you have decided to give to God. It is going to be given not reluctantly but not under compulsion as if God is going to force it to you, but it is done in a manner where it is cheerfully and voluntarily given.

So these are the characteristics of Christian giving. First of all, Christian giving is:

1. With a great big smile on the face, because you are a cheerful giver. You are happy. You have an attitude of having this been thought out. It is deliberate.
2. It is from the heart, it is genuine.
3. It is not reluctant; it is generously happily given.

Now the other thing is, why would we be cheerfully giving away a significant portion of our income to other people, most people giving money away won't be happy. It says here

7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

We are actually cheerfully giving because when we give cheerfully we know we are actually making God happy, because God loves a cheerful giver. Our motive for giving cheerfully because it pleases God and because we love God, we want to please him.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every

good work.

Which means we give cheerfully because right inside our hearts, we believe that we won't be worse off. Whatever we give, God will actually replenish and provide for us. So giving cheerfully is an expression of our faith in God as a provider. Now when we give and we give reluctantly, it means that we actually don't have that kind of faith that believe that God will resupply us. That's why we need to give cheerfully.

So let's summarize, we are going to be cheerful givers to the Lord. It is going to be deliberate, which means it is going to be thought out, it is from the heart, it is genuine, it is not reluctant, so therefore it is generously given, happily given, also you give because you want to be what God loves, a cheerful giver, because this honest God and this is what God loves and you want to put a smile on God's face. So therefore you give cheerfully and you give in a manner that is trusting that God will be able to provide for you, so that you would be able to give now and even in the future. This brings us to the idea of how much do we give. Well, we have to determine in our minds what to give, which means it has got to be deliberate. You think it out, in a proportion that you actually give is not set, it is done in such a way that when you give you've thought it out, it genuinely what you can part with in your heart. It is not reluctantly given, and you give it in such a way that God will be able to provide for you in the future. So therefore whatever we give is in a proportion of our income. God is not asking that you give the entire amount away but it is always a proportion, but the portion is decided by deliberately thinking it out as an act of faith, believing that whatever you give God will be able to provide for you in the future and this actually pleases God. So there is no hard and fast rule of how much one gives as long as it is proportionate to whatever God has given you, it is thought out, it is from the heart and it is done in such a way as an act of faith, trusting that God will provide.

Then looking at verse 9

9 As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.

Whenever you see in scripture something in the New Testament, as it is written, it always refers back to the Old Testament. In this particular case, it refers to Old Testament Psalm 112. In order to understand the particular quotation, we need to read Psalm 112 in its context and this Psalm 112 describes a man walking righteously, a man who God favors and it says

Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! 2 His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. 3 Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. 4 Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous. 5 It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. 6 For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. 7 He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. 8 His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. 9 He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.

So therefore what Paul is doing is reminding us, how the Psalm celebrates features of a righteous man. A righteous man is the one who delights in God's commandment, who walks closely in God's commandments. His generations will be blessed and he is a generous man.

This principle of giving voluntarily and not under compulsion and cheerfully is actually seen in the earlier verses where you actually see Paul asking the Corinthians to prepare the gift well ahead of time, so that when he actually visited them with the Macedonian brothers, their gift will be ready because it would have reflected the fact that the Corinthians would have prepared the gift beforehand because they were willing to give and they gave from the

heart, it was not reluctantly given, it was given cheerfully. If they have actually not prepared it and they only started collecting the money when Paul had arrived, then it would seem as if Paul had been actually forcing them to give this gift.

5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

So the principle is when you give, it must be as a willing gift from cheerful givers, eager to be partners with God and not as something forced.

This principle of voluntarily giving unfortunately has been distorted very much in the past even by famous Christians. Peter Marshall was a chaplain to the United States congress and he writes, "Give according to your income, lest God make your income according to your giving"-

You can see here; the challenge is for people to give sacrificially but it is because if you don't give sacrificially then your income will also start to dwindle. So that is actually a negative way in which we encourage people to give. That's not how the Bible does this.

Here is another way in which Christian giving has been wrongly encouraged. In 1895 a Wesley Chapel in Cincinnati had great financial trouble. The chapel had incurred such a heavy debt burden. The leadership of the church under William G. Roberts were under such great pressure, they had to find some gimmick in order to raise money to cover the debts. When all the other gimmicks failed, they thought of this idea called the store house tithing, to bring guilt upon the church, so that they would actually bring money in to support the building. What they did was they used the passage in the Old Testament called Malachi 3:10 to challenge people to bring money, 10% of their income so that they would be able to finance the building and they actually dangled Malachi chapter 3 and used it to intimidate the congregation.

Malachi 3:7 From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?' 8 Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. 10 Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

So there are two aspects of this, first they are implying that if they give less than the actual tithe which is 10%, then they are actually robbing God and if you are robbing God you are going to be cursed and so that's a threat. Therefore, there is also the positive part where he challenged them that God will actually give to them, God will bless them back with greater amounts of money. Now this passage has been wrongly applied because the entire Book of Malachi was written as a rebuke to the Levites in the days of the prophet Malachi and was a rebuke from God. The Levites had hoarded all the food tithed to them, and had not tithed their choicest 10% of goods to feed the needy. So this rebuke was historically towards the Levites and you can't use it to justify giving 10% of one's income to the church building fund. In New Testament, you are supposed to give from your heart, genuinely, cheerfully and voluntarily.

So here is a promise given to us by God

Proverbs 1:17 Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.

So actually when we are giving money for Christian ministries to help the poor, we are actually lending money to God as it were. It is something that God will repay us for our deeds. He is not going to be your debtor and He is a trustworthy person to lend money to, because He will always repay.

We so easily lend money to humans who will actually cheat us, how much more should we actually trust God, who will definitely repay us. Here is Paul writing

1 Corinthians 16:1-3 Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. 3 And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.

So basically you have got to plan ahead. You got to decide. You got to put something aside for this offering.

3. GIVING IS A WORSHIP MULTIPLIER

12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

So not only you are giving and providing for the needs of the poorer saints, but in doing so they are going to thank God for the gift that they have received from your hands, but they attribute the source to God.

13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

4. GIVING PROMOTES CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS

13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.

So here we have a situation where the people who have been blessed because of your giving will reciprocate by love. There is a bond of fellowship that has been established because of this wonderful gift that you have given them, because of your generosity which comes because of your submission to the gospel of Christ, because of your generosity they long for you. This means God's grace has so touched us that we have released our money and given to them and the money has so blessed them that they have reciprocated in feelings of love and fellowship and they intern now pray for you. So Christian giving actually promotes Christian relationships.

A story was told of famous author Bruce Wilkinson and his son David. They were in Johannesburg in South Africa and were speaking on engagement and suddenly felt a great craving for ice cream. So they rushed back to the hotel where they were staying and in the closing minutes asked the waitress there for some ice cream but she said the kitchen was closed, but they could have coffee instead. Bruce and his son said, yes we will have some coffee but if there is any way you could find us some ice cream we would be very appreciative of this. Then the Lord actually gave Bruce a nudge...."give her a big tip...very big tip". He told his son David and he said "Yes dad I was thinking about the very same thing but a really big tip for what?"

They laughed but Bruce was uncomfortable and he had been to the bank recently and happened to have a large roll of South African money in his pocket and God was linking the tip and this cash together. What they did was they slipped the money to her in to her apron pocket and were not feeling heroic or insightful but more uncomfortable as the only reason men give that much money to a woman was for sex in a hotel so they were worried. Three minutes later on she came running out with tears in her eyes saying "You know Jesus don't you?"

Yes, I knew it, this is a miracle she explained. I have a baby and we could not make the rent and the Landlord was going to kick us out of our apartment tomorrow morning and I prayed to God on the way to work this afternoon. Please Lord send us the money or we will be on the streets. She wiped the tears from her eyes...this is the exact amount of rent I owe to the landlord, that is why I knew you knew Jesus.

What happened is that when they gave the money to the waitress, they met a need, increase glory, she attributed the glory to God. She attributed the focus onto the Lord and it brought fellowship between strangers, between a Christian sister who is a waitress and Bruce Wilkinson and his son.

So there are great blessings of Christian giving

1. It is your investment in the Kingdom (v6,9-11)
2. It is entirely voluntary, deliberate and done cheerfully (v7)
3. It is a worship multiplier (v 11-13 ,15)
4. It promotes Christian fellowship (v 14)

QUESTIONS:

1. How is giving like investing in the Kingdom?
2. What are the two reasons God re-supply us with more sources after we give?
3. Renowned reformer Martin Luther said, "I have had many things in my hands that I lost; the things that I placed in the hands of God I still possess." What did he mean?
4. Why can't I just give the spare change in my pocket when the offering bag comes around?
5. Look at 2 Cor 9:7 and discuss whether in this verse God tells us that we must give 10% or a tithe or does this verse indicate a different standard?
6. Peter Marshall was a chaplain to the United States congress and he writes, "Give according to your income, lest God make your income according to your giving" Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
7. How does giving promote Christian fellowship?