

Proposition: Ministry takes place when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels for the glory of God.

## The Background of Grace Giving

The last time Paul mentioned giving was in I Cor 16:1-4. Matthew Henry – “How cautious ministers should be, especially in money-matters, not to give occasion to those who seek occasion to speak reproachfully!”

## The story behind the gift from the churches in Macedonia

The area of Macedonia included Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, had at one time been rich. The Romans had taken possession of the gold and silver mines and the country was “like a lacerated and disjointed animal” (Alfred Plummer).

The Macedonian churches that Paul was using as an example had experienced severe difficulties, and yet they had given generously. They had not simply gone through “affliction”; they had experienced a “great trial of affliction” (2 Cor. 8:2). They were in *deep poverty*, which means “rock-bottom destitution.” The word describes a beggar who has absolutely nothing and has no hope of getting anything. Their difficult situation may have been caused in part by their Christian faith, for they may have lost their jobs or been excluded from the trade guilds because they refused to have anything to do with idolatry.

But their circumstances did not hinder them from giving. In fact, they gave joyfully and liberally! No computer could analyze this amazing formula: great affliction and deep poverty *plus* grace = abundant joy and abounding liberality! It reminds us of the paradox in Paul’s ministry: “as poor, yet making many rich” (2 Cor. 6:10).<sup>1</sup>

**Illustration:** It would be like the group of men and women who stand at the intersection of West Broadway and HWY 94 requesting hand-outs, combining their money to support the needs of a small church in Indonesia who suffered from the aftermath of a Tsunami like the one in December 26, 2004 (over 220,000 estimated dead in Indonesia alone because of the Tsunami).

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<sup>1</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1989. *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

Like Paul, the Macedonian churches had learned that God's grace is sufficient to take their weaknesses and through them to display God's power (4:7-12; 12:9; Phil. 4:13).<sup>2</sup>

"We want you to know" – (pres. Act. Ind) we draw your attention to

"the grace" – the generous giving on the part of Christians

"that has been given" – (per. Pass. Part) the state or condition with ongoing results

"overflowed in a wealth of generosity" – SINGLENESS OF MIND

1. **Grace is from God. (God's Riches At Christ's Expense; 2 Cor. 1:2)**
2. **Grace is empowered by the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:4-6)**
3. **Grace is modeled by Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 8:9)**
4. **Grace is administered through believers. (2 Cor. 1:15; 7:6-7; 8:1, 7)**

**THE PROBLEM TO AVOID – RECEIVING GOD'S GRACE IN VAIN. (2 Cor. 6:1)**

## **Controversy Swirls Around Billionaire Commencement Debt Relief<sup>3</sup>**

Headlines rocketed through social media after billionaire Robert F. Smith made an unprecedented announcement during his commencement speech in front of the Morehouse College graduating class of 2019. "My family is going to create a grant to eliminate your student loans," Smith told the senior class. "You great Morehouse men are bound only by the limits of your own conviction and creativity."

The momentous announcement generated plenty of buzz for the historically black, all male college. Plenty of jokes and memes predictably followed. ("Are you free this time next year?" asked the Class of 2020.)

However, an undercurrent of resentment has been stirred up among other African Americans who saved and sacrificed in order to pay for their children's college education. Michelle Singletary, a personal finance columnist for *The Washington Post*, explains:

There's a common complaint I hear from some parents who have sacrificed and saved for their children to attend college debt-free ... Was my labor in vain? Those not on the receiving end of this amazing gift might have thought to themselves, even for just a

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<sup>2</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

<sup>3</sup><https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2019/july/controversy-swirls-around-billionaire-commencement-debt-rel.html>

second: “What about us? What do we get for doing the right thing and saving for our kids to go to college debt-free?”

Still, Singletary has encouraging words for those who did it the hard way.

Your saving and sacrificing doesn’t make you a ... loser. It makes you responsible and fortunate. There’s so much reward in living within your means, including setting a good example for your children. Whether it’s a surprise gift from a billionaire or need-based aid given to some other’s person’s child, don’t resent what others get.

*Potential Preaching Angles: God’s generosity should not be confused with our human instinct for fairness or equivalence, because God’s extravagant love and grace know no bounds. We miss the mark when we devalue God’s generosity by arguing about fairness. Allana Akhtar, “A billionaire’s surprise vow to pay Morehouse graduates’ loans is part of the newest trend in the student-debt crisis,” Business Insider (5-20-19); Michelle Singletary, “Robert Smith pledged to pay off Morehouse graduates’ student loans. Is this fair to families who saved?” Washington Post (5-23-19)*

## **THE BACKGROUND OF GRACE GIVING:**

### **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT GRACE GIVING:**

#### **2 Corinthians 8-9**

- Grace giving is motivated by JOY not a fixed percentage. (begins in 8:1-2 and ends in 9:14-15)
- Grace giving is managed by a PERSONAL DECISION not a fixed percentage. (9:6-7; 8:12)

#### Tithe in the OT:

1. Before the LAW (Abraham to Melchizedek in Gen 14:18-20 = 10%)
2. Under the LAW (3 Types of Tithes (tithe=tenth) Required of the Jewish people = over 23% of total income each year.)
  - a. The Clergy or Levitical Tithe: Used to fund the theocracy by sustaining the priests and Levites who served the people (Lev 27:30-33; Numbers 18:21-32) [Given Yearly]
  - b. The Religious Festival Tithe: Used for the celebration of convocations of worship at the sanctuary [Given Yearly or as often as the crop produced...] (Deut. 14:22-27)

- c. The Welfare Tithe: Used to feed the Levites, the orphans, the widows, and the stranger. On year 3 and 6 of the 7 year sabbatical cycle, rather than taking this tithe to the central sanctuary, it was instead stored up within the individual cities in the Land (Deut 26:12; Num 18:26-32)

... note the lack of obedience in Neh 13:10-13

... note God's response to this lack of obedience in Malachi 3:8-10

3. After Christ

- a. Give out of gratitude for the grace you have received.

Categories of biblical needs:

- **#1 - Your Personal Family**
  - **I Timothy 5:8; Eph. 4:28**
- **#2 - Your Church Community**
  - **Pastor/Teachers**
    - **Galatians 6:6-9; I Timothy 5:17**
  - **Fellow believers**
    - **Acts 2:44-45; Gal. 6:10; James 1:27**
  - **Future believers**
    - **Matt. 28:19-20**
- **#3 – Your Surrounding Community**
  - **Gal. 6:10**

**10-10-80 Principle**

**5-5-10-80 Principle**

**90-10 Principle**

**Illustration:**

**Robert Gilmour LeTourneau** (November 30, 1888 – June 1, 1969), born in [Richford, Vermont](#), was a prolific inventor of earthmoving machinery, and founder of [LeTourneau Technologies, Inc<sup>\[1\]</sup>](#) and [LeTourneau University](#). His factories supplied machinery which represented nearly 70 percent of the earthmoving equipment and [engineering vehicles](#) used by the [Allied forces](#) during [World War II](#),<sup>[2]</sup> and more than half of the 1,500-mile (2,414 km) [Alcan Highway](#) in Canada was built with LeTourneau equipment. Over the course of his life he secured nearly 300 [patents](#) relating to earthmoving equipment, manufacturing processes and machine tools.

LeTourneau set aside 90 percent of his salary and company profits for religious donations, living on the other 10 percent.<sup>[15]</sup>

## ***THE BACKGROUND OF GRACE GIVING:***

## ***GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT GRACE GIVING:***

### **GUIDELINES FOR GRACE GIVING: (2 Cor. 8:3-7)**

1. [v.3a] “According to their means” **GIVE PROPORTIONATELY** (Explain the tithe from OT perspective) – Make Giving a Priority in your house!

I cannot go very far in this area of proportionate giving without saying that the average American, cannot begin to comprehend the extent of global poverty. We think we have to cut corners in our giving because we are unwilling to sacrifice a regular stop at Starbucks coffee!

Consider how much more we could do as American churches if we proportioned more of our giving into training nationals and sending professional teachers abroad to equip the people right where they live!

God sets no fixed amount or percentage and expects His people to give based on what they have (Luke 6:38; I Corinthians 16:2)

#### **Luke 6:37-38**

**37** “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; **38** give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

#### **I Corinthians 16:1-2**

**16:1** 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.

#### **2 Corinthians 8:12**

**12** For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

The trouble is that too many people are spending money they haven't yet earned for things they don't need to impress people they don't like. -- [Unknown](#).

**Application:** What kind of a priority does giving have in your commitment to Christ? When was the last time you compared God's grace in salvation, sanctification, and daily provision to your response to the needs of the local church, global missions, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger?

1. [v.3a] "According to their means" **GIVE PROPORTIONATELY**
2. [v.3b] "Beyond their means" **GIVE SACRIFICIALLY** (Phil 4:9)

I went into church and sat on the velvet pew. I watched as the sun came shining through the stained-glass windows. The minister dressed in a velvet robe opened the golden gilded Bible, marked it with a silk bookmark and said, "If any man will be my disciple, said Jesus, let him deny himself, take up his cross, sell what he has, give it to the poor, and follow me."

[Soren Kierkegaard, in "And I looked Around and Nobody was Laughing."](#)

Does your lifestyle dictate your giving or your giving dictate your lifestyle?

Jim Eliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Application: What are you willing to sacrifice out of deep appreciation for your salvation?

1. [v.3a] "According to their means" **GIVE PROPORTIONATELY**
2. [v.3b] "Beyond their means" **GIVE SACRIFICIALLY** (Mark 12:41-44; Phil 4:9)
3. [v.3c] "Of their own free will" **GIVE VOLUNTARILY** – God's people are not to give out of compulsion, manipulation, or intimidation. Freewill giving has always been God's plan (9:6; **Gen 4:2-4**; Num 18:12; Deut 16:10, 17; Prov 3:9, 10; Luke 19:1-8)

*Reason for having an offering basket in the back as opposed to passing plates.*

## **2 Corinthians 9:6**

**6** The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

## **Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-5)**

**4:1** Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten [\[1\]](#) a man with the help of the LORD." **2** And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. **3** In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, **4** and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, **5** but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

## **Deuteronomy 16:10, 17**

**10** Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you.

**17** Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.

## **Proverbs 3:9-10**

**9** Honor the LORD with your wealth  
and with the firstfruits of all your produce;

**10** then your barns will be filled with plenty,  
and your vats will be bursting with wine.

On a blood-bank poster which read: "Be a volunteer Blood Donor," somebody had printed, "That's the best kind." -- [Ed Freeman, quoted by Herb Cain in the \*San Francisco Chronicle\*.](#)

Illustration: Students at Maranatha “volunteering” to give \$1 toward the college extension ministry which allowed the students to wear business casual on Friday’s.

Application: Have you been giving out of duty or delight? God’s people are not to give out of compulsion, manipulation, or intimidation.

1. [v.3a] “According to their means” **GIVE PROPORTIONATELY**
2. [v.3b] “Beyond their means” **GIVE SACRIFICIALLY**
3. [v.3c] “Of their own free will” **GIVE VOLUNTARILY**
4. [v.4] “Begging us earnestly... to take part” **GIVE EAGERLY** (9:6-7) – They pleaded for the privilege of sharing!

#### **When We Give Enthusiastically (2 Cor. 8:3–4)**

It is possible to give generously but not give enthusiastically. “The preacher says I should give until it hurts,” said a miserly church member, “but for me, it hurts just to think about giving!” The Macedonian churches needed no prompting or reminding, as did the church at Corinth. They were more than willing to share in the collection. In fact, *they begged to be included!* (2 Cor. 8:4) How many times have you heard a Christian *beg* for somebody to take an offering?

Their giving was voluntary and spontaneous. It was of grace, not pressure. They gave because they wanted to give and because they had experienced the grace of God. Grace not only frees us from our sins, but it frees us from ourselves. The grace of God will open your heart *and your hand*. Your giving is not the result of cold calculation, but of warmhearted jubilation!<sup>4</sup>

### **Spiritual Blessings in Christ – Ephesians 1:3-10**

**3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, **4** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he predestined us [\[1\]](#) for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. **7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, **8** which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight **9** making known [\[2\]](#) to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ **10** as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

#### **Illustration:**

A mother wanted to teach her daughter a moral lesson. She gave the little girl a quarter and a dollar for church "Put whichever one you want in the collection plate and keep the other for yourself," she told the girl. When they were coming out of church, the mother asked her daughter which amount she had given. "Well," said the little girl, "I was going to give the dollar, but just before the collection the man in the

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<sup>4</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1989. *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

pulpit said that we should all be cheerful givers. I knew I'd be a lot more cheerful if I gave the quarter, so I did." -- *Bits & Pieces*, February 4, 1993, p. 23.

Application: When was the last time that you looked for an opportunity to volunteer your gift of grace in the local body? BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR SOMEONE IN NEED!

Proposition: Ministry takes place when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels for the glory of God.

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4. [v.4] "Begging us earnestly... to take part" **GIVE EAGERLY**
5. [v.5] "They gave themselves first to the Lord and then, by the will of God, to us" **GIVE WORSHIPFULLY** (note the priority of God first... then neighbor – Matthew 22:37-40)

### Romans 12:1-2

**12:1** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, [1] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] **2** Do not be conformed to this world, [3] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply acknowledging a great debt we owe to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny? It is emphatically no sacrifice. Rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, danger, foregoing the common conveniences of this life--these may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing compared with the glory which shall later be revealed in and through us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk, when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us. -- [David Livingstone](#).

Application: Do you take the time to prayerfully consider your gift as first and foremost to God and then for the needs of others in the body of Christ? Pause and meditate on God as you give!

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4. [v.4] "Begging us earnestly... to take part" **GIVE EAGERLY**
5. [v.5] "They gave themselves first to the Lord and then, to us" **GIVE WORSHIPFULLY**
6. [v.6] "Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace" **GIVE DILIGENTLY** (finish what you start)

**2 Timothy 4:7 -- 7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Paul was concerned that Titus finish what he started with regard to the giving. (cf. vs 11)

It is often easy to start strong then fade away... get up and go only to procrastinate later...



### **Illustration on the danger of procrastination:**

A farm boy accidentally overturned his wagonload of corn in the road. The farmer who lived nearby came to investigate. "Hey, Willis," he called out, "forget your troubles for a spell and come on in and have dinner with us. Then I'll help you get the wagon up."

"That's mighty nice of you," Willis answered, "But I don't think Pa would like me to."

"Aw, come on, son!" the farmer insisted.

"Well, okay," the boy finally agreed. "But Pa won't like it."

After a hearty dinner, Willis thanked his host. "I feel a lot better now, but I just know Pa is going to be real upset."

"Don't be foolish!" exclaimed the neighbor. "By the way, where is he?"

"Under the wagon."

**Application:** How many goals, projects or objectives are you currently attempting? May be you need to reprioritize your life and focus on the follow-through of that which lasts for all eternity!

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6. [v.6] "Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace"  
**GIVE DILIGENTLY**
  
7. [v.7] "But as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you (or love for us) – see that you excel in this act of grace also" **GIVE HOLISTICALLY** (giving is one of the many ways we demonstrate our appreciation for God's grace)

### **GIVING IS ONE OF THE SIGNS OF UNDERSTANDING THE GRACE OF GOD**

2 Peter 1:3-8

**3** His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to [\[1\]](#) his own glory and excellence, [\[2\]](#) **4** by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. **5** For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, [\[3\]](#) and virtue with knowledge, **6** and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, **7** and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. **8** For if these qualities [\[4\]](#) are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Excel in this grace = Don't get satisfied with successfully arriving until you have completely mastered the depths of God's grace!

**Illustration:** Putting together a puzzle with Heather and being "satisfied" with completing the edges... completing the edges demonstrates progress but it is simply one measure in many to finishing the picture.

**Application:** Do you find yourself content with compartmentalizing your giving ("I give my tithe" or "I must give more than him!") or do you view giving as one of the measures of understanding and applying God's grace for you personally?

**The Grace Giving Formula:**

- Great affliction and deep poverty
- Grace
- Abundant joy and abounding generosity

**Application:**

- Giving must be motivated by the grace of God not a fixed percent. (2 Cor 8:1-9:15)
- Giving must be measured by the attitude of the giver not the amount of the gift.
- Are you participating in the joy of grace giving?
  - If not, take some time to reflect on the grace you have received from our Triune God and take advantage of the opportunity to share it with those around you.

The best way to inventory your willingness to give is through your personal journal (aka you checking account 😊).

Make a budget.

- If you are not keeping track of your money, you have no idea how much you are giving.
- If you are keeping track of your money, what does the bank account reveal about your understanding of God's grace (your willingness to give)?