



SEA CHANGE
CHURCH

THE CURRENT

The Spirituality of Giving · S1E3

Sow What?

A 7-Day Study

"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 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. As it is written, 'He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' 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. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 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, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!"

2 Corinthians 9:6–15 ESV

Pastor Adam Stadtmiller · October 4, 2026

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

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

2 Corinthians 9:7

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Each week, The Current walks through a piece of Sunday's passage: a short verse study, encouragement, journal questions, and a daily prayer.

Take one day at a time. There's no need to rush.

DAY 1

The Point Is This

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6 ESV

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

VERSE STUDY

Paul does not ease into this. He announces that he is about to say the main thing, and then says it in the plainest agricultural terms available: the size of the sowing has something to do with the size of the reaping. No one who has ever planted anything finds this controversial. It only becomes uncomfortable when the seed in question is money.

The series has been working forward through three covenantal eras, and this is the last of them. Before the law, giving happened without any command at all. Under the Mosaic law, a tenth was required and failing to bring it carried real consequence. Here, on the far side of the cross, the command is gone. What remains is instruction, and the week's governing word is exactly that.

Sunday's message leaned on a half-built shed to make the difference land. A flat-pack delivery arrived with a manual hundreds of pages long, the assembly was abandoned early in favor of improvisation, and the thing has sat in a yard ever since, bent by the wind, waiting on instructions that blew away. Nobody was commanded to follow them. The shed still fell over.

That is the honest shape of an instruction. It does not threaten, and it does not need to. It simply describes how something actually works, and leaves the following of it to us. Verse 6 is not a warning about what God will withhold from the stingy. It is a description of what sowing is, offered to people who are free to take it or leave it.

TAKE HEART

There is something freeing in being told the point up front. Paul is not building a case to spring on anyone at the end, and the passage is not an appeal dressed up as teaching. It opens with its conclusion and then spends nine verses explaining why the conclusion is good news rather than pressure. We get to read the rest of it already knowing where it lands, which is a kinder way to be taught than most of us expect when the subject turns to money.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Where has the language of command crept into our thinking about giving, in a covenant that no longer commands it?
2. If an instruction describes how something genuinely works, what have we been treating as optional that was only ever meant to be freely chosen?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, save that of knowing that I do your will."

The Prayer for Generosity, attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola

ACTION CHALLENGE

Read the whole of 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 in one sitting this week, slowly, before deciding anything. The passage states its point first and then explains it, and it is worth meeting the explanation before the decision.

NOTES

DAY 2

As He Has Decided

2 CORINTHIANS 9:7 ESV

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

VERSE STUDY

The English carries a "must" that the Greek does not. There is no imperative verb behind it, and Adam was careful to say so from the platform rather than let the translation do work the original never asked it to do. What stands in the text is each one, and a decision already made.

That small grammatical point moves the whole weight of the thing. Under the law, giving was commanded to a community all at once: a tenth, from everyone, on a schedule, with consequence attached. Here it lands on one person at a time. Each one. The change is not that generosity stopped mattering, but that it stopped being administered collectively and started being decided personally.

This is how the Spirit tends to lead, individually and particularly, and it gives us far more agency than a rule ever did. Sea Change remains a gathered church, and the New Covenant does not dissolve that; the scripture still tells us not to neglect meeting together. But the conversation about what any one household gives is now held between that household and God, and it is a conversation many of us quietly avoid having at all.

Avoidance is worth naming honestly, because it is the most common response to a decision that nobody will enforce. The message was candid that there are conversations with God most of us put off, and that giving is often one of them. An unmade decision is still a decision; it simply gets made by default, by inertia, and by whatever is left at the end of the month.

TAKE HEART

Being handed the decision is not the same as being left alone with it. The same God who declined to command also promised to lead, and that is a better arrangement than a fixed percentage imposed from outside. A rule can only tell us the minimum. A conversation can tell us what this particular year, this particular income and this particular set of needs actually call for, which is something no rule could have known in advance.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. What makes the conversation about our giving one we are inclined to postpone?
2. If the decision has been left to us rather than imposed on us, what have we actually decided, and when did we last revisit it?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen."

John Wesley, the Covenant Prayer

ACTION CHALLENGE

Set aside ten minutes this week specifically to have the conversation rather than to reach a figure. The deciding can follow; the avoiding is the part worth ending first.

NOTES

DAY 3

Not Under Compulsion

2 CORINTHIANS 9:7 ESV

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

VERSE STUDY

Two things are ruled out by name. Reluctance, which gives while wishing it did not. And compulsion, which gives because something outside the heart is applying pressure. Paul closes off both, and what is left is a cheerful giver, which is the only kind the verse says God loves.

The verb behind "has decided" carries the sense of having chosen beforehand, deliberately and in advance rather than in the moment. That matters for cheerfulness more than it first appears. A decision made under the gaze of an appeal, or at the end of a service, or in the middle of a hard month, is made in conditions that manufacture reluctance. A decision settled calmly in advance is free to be glad when the moment comes.

Which is why guilt is such a poor engine for any of this. It can certainly produce a gift. It cannot produce the heart the verse describes, because guilt and freedom are working against each other: relief is not the same as gladness. Last week's phrase for this was pressure valve giving, the gift that discharges a bad feeling and then goes quiet until the pressure builds again. It soothes the giver without ever forming the giver.

None of which is an argument for giving less. It is an argument about where the decision gets made. A gift chosen in advance, from a settled heart, in no particular emotional weather, turns out to be both more generous and more durable than one extracted at a moment of maximum feeling.

TAKE HEART

Cheerfulness here is not a mood we have to manufacture before we are allowed to give. It is closer to the relief of having already decided. Much of what makes giving feel heavy is the deciding, done repeatedly, under pressure, in public, with the question reopened every time. Settle it once, quietly, and the gladness tends to arrive on its own, because there is nothing left to wrestle at the moment of giving.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. What conditions tend to be in place when our giving decisions get made, and do those conditions make reluctance more likely or less?
2. Where has relief been standing in for gladness in the way we give?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

Psalm 51:10–12

ACTION CHALLENGE

Notice one gift this week that is driven by guilt rather than gladness, and hold it back until it can be given freely. The point is not to give less but to let the heart catch up with the hand.

NOTES

DAY 4

All Sufficiency

2 CORINTHIANS 9:8 ESV

"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."

VERSE STUDY

The sentence is built out of totals. All grace, all sufficiency, all things, all times, every good work. Paul is not promising a narrow adequacy that just about covers the gap. He is describing a supply with margin in it, and then naming what the margin is for.

That last clause is the one that keeps this verse from drifting into something it is not. The sufficiency is given so that we may abound in every good work. Provision is not the destination; it is what makes the next act of generosity possible. Read without the purpose clause, verse 8 sounds like a promise of comfort. Read whole, it is a promise of capacity.

It is worth being honest that this verse has been badly used. A passage about grace abounding has been pressed into service as a guarantee of returns, and plenty of people have been hurt by that. Sunday's message did not dodge the problem, acknowledging the damage done by preaching that treats God as a mechanism for personal increase, while still refusing to let the discomfort empty the verse of what it actually says.

What it actually says is that the sufficiency comes from God's ability rather than from ours. God is able. The security on offer is not a balance that never dips but a Giver who does not run short, which is a different kind of confidence and a steadier one. It is possible to hold that without turning it into a transaction.

TAKE HEART

All times is a quietly enormous phrase. It includes the seasons when the numbers are comfortable and the seasons when they are not, and it does not promise that the two will feel the same. Sufficiency is not the absence of tight months. It is the presence of a God whose supply does not depend on the month we happen to be in, and who has shown a long habit of being adequate at exactly the point where we had run out of ways to arrange it ourselves.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. When we imagine having enough, what are we picturing, and how closely does it match what this verse means by sufficiency?
2. What good work might become possible if provision were held as capacity for generosity rather than as security to protect?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things are passing away. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices."

St. Teresa of Ávila, often called Teresa's Bookmark

ACTION CHALLENGE

Name one thing this week that is genuinely sufficient rather than abundant, and give out of it anyway. Verse 8 ties sufficiency to good work, not to waiting for surplus.

NOTES

DAY 5

He Has Distributed Freely

2 CORINTHIANS 9:9 ESV

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

VERSE STUDY

Paul stops his own argument to quote Psalm 112, and the quotation is worth reading in its own setting. The psalm is a portrait of a person who fears the LORD: steady, unafraid of bad news, generous in lending, conducting affairs with justice. The line Paul lifts comes near the end of that description, as a summary of a whole way of living rather than as a single admirable act.

Two things travel with the quotation. The giving is free, distributed without calculation of return, and it is directed to the poor specifically. The passage has been building a case about the giver's heart, and here it names a destination. Generosity in this psalm is not a general warmth; it goes somewhere, and where it goes is toward people who cannot reciprocate.

The righteousness that endures forever belongs to the same picture. It is not a reward bolted onto the generosity afterwards; it is what a life of that shape amounts to. The psalm is describing permanence, something that outlasts the particular gifts and the particular year, which is a strange and good thing to say about money that has been given away and is now gone.

Sea Change has been naming where this lands concretely rather than leaving it abstract, with care for the poor, the aged and the infirm standing among the ministry priorities the church intends to carry with its own people rather than fund from a distance. The psalm's picture does not stay at the level of attitude, and neither has the series.

TAKE HEART

What endures forever, in the psalm's reckoning, is not the amount. It is the righteousness, the shape a life takes when generosity has been practiced long enough to become ordinary. That is quietly encouraging for anyone whose giving feels small. The psalm is not measuring the gift against anyone else's; it is describing a direction of travel, and a direction can be taken up at any size and at any point.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Where does our generosity currently go, and how much of it reaches people who are in no position to return it?
2. What would it mean for giving to become a description of who we are rather than a series of decisions we make?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor."

Psalm 112:1, 5–9, the psalm Paul quotes in verse 9

ACTION CHALLENGE

Give something this week to someone who cannot return it and will not know to thank the church for it. The psalm's picture points in that direction specifically.

NOTES

DAY 6

Seed, Bread, and Harvest

2 CORINTHIANS 9:10–11 ESV

"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. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God."

VERSE STUDY

Verse 10 is built on a repeated "and," and the repetition is doing real work. The construction piles clauses onto one another rather than setting them side by side as alternatives, which means the three things named are joined: God supplies seed to the sower, multiplies that seed for sowing, and increases the harvest of righteousness. The grammar does not offer a choice among them.

This was the week's most carefully argued point, and it was argued against the preacher's own instinct. The honest admission from the platform was a dislike of teaching that treats giving as a deposit against a financial return, and a preference for reading the harvest as righteousness alone. A staff colleague who reads it that way was named from the pulpit and left room to disagree, which is a decent model for handling a contested text in public.

The reading offered was that the repeated conjunction refuses to let provision and righteousness be separated. Paul's first readers would not have heard seed as a metaphor at all; seed was provision, convertible to money and back again. So the verse appears to say both things at once: real supply for real need, and a harvest of righteousness that is not reducible to it.

The guardrail sits in the next verse, and it is the reason this does not become a formula. Enriched in every way to be generous in every way. The enrichment has a stated purpose, and the purpose is more generosity, not a higher standard of living. Verse 11 ends with thanksgiving to God, which is where the whole chain is pointed.

TAKE HEART

It is a relief that the text does not ask us to choose between taking God seriously about provision and taking him seriously about righteousness. Plenty of us have been handed one or the other: a gospel of returns that curdles, or a spiritualizing that quietly implies God is not much interested in whether there is food on the table. The repeated "and" suggests a God who is attentive to both, and who ties them together on purpose rather than making us pick.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Which half of verse 10 are we more inclined to discount, the provision or the righteousness, and what has made us wary of it?

2. If enrichment exists in order to make more generosity possible, what would change in how we hold any increase that comes?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy."

Psalm 65:9–13

ACTION CHALLENGE

Trace one provision from the past year back to its source, and give a portion of it away this week. Verse 10 describes supply that arrives in order to be sown again.

NOTES

His Inexpressible Gift

2 CORINTHIANS 9:12–15 ESV

"For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 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, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!"

VERSE STUDY

The chapter ends somewhere other than where a chapter about money would be expected to end. Paul traces what a collection actually does, and the first thing he names is not the need it meets. It is the thanksgiving it produces. The gift supplies the saints, and then overflows, and the overflow runs back toward God.

There is a second effect, and it is relational. The people receiving long for the givers and pray for them. Money sent between churches who had never met created affection and intercession in both directions. Generosity turns out to be a way of binding people to one another, which is a strange thing for a transaction to accomplish and is probably the point.

Then comes the last line, and it reframes every verse before it. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift. The series has returned to this repeatedly: every gift points back to the cross, and the whole of Christian giving is an attempt to replicate something rather than to purchase anything. The summation of the gospel can fairly be described as God giving, and giving his Son.

Which is why the week closed where it did, with the observation that a wallet is only ever a component of a larger sacrifice, and the larger sacrifice is the whole person. An image from C.S. Lewis carried it: God is not after a branch here and a limb there but the whole tree down. The message pressed the picture further than Lewis took it, to a new tree planted in place of the old, springing up into the righteousness this chapter keeps naming.

TAKE HEART

Inexpressible is an honest word to end on. Paul has spent a chapter being precise about seed and harvest and sufficiency, and then reaches the gift at the center of it and admits that language runs out. Everything we give is a response to something already given that cannot be matched or repaid, which takes the pressure off the giving entirely. We are not funding anything God is short of. We are answering, in the small currency available to us, a gift that was never going to be matched.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. When our giving is traced back to its source, does it read as a response to the cross or as something more like an obligation managed?
2. Who might end up giving thanks to God because of something we give this year, and does that change how the gift feels?

DAILY PRAYER

Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:

"Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen."

A Prayer of St. Richard of Chichester

ACTION CHALLENGE

Before the next gift, name the gift it is answering. The chapter ends in thanksgiving rather than in arithmetic, and giving tends to change character when it starts there.

NOTES

MEMORY VERSE

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

2 Corinthians 9:7

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