

## Perspectives of the Bible on Partnership Development

Adapted by Howard Killion from ISI's 100Plus Participant Manual, June 2008

### God's attitude toward us.

1. **Genesis 1 and 2** (especially 1:26-2:10, 15-25) show how carefully God created a world in which all of our needs would be met: abundance, variety, beauty, meaningful work, creativity, discipline, personal meaning and significance, companionship, family, and society. He declared that it was "very good" (1:31). God demonstrated His loving generosity and powerful reliability toward us from the very beginning.
2. This is the basis for Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about the generosity and reliability of God on our behalf: **Matthew 6:7-11, 25, 32-33**.

### Our attitude toward God

1. **Genesis 3:1-13**: Essentially the sin of Adam and Eve was due to their doubting the generosity and reliability of God in spite of all they had seen and heard.
2. The generosity and reliability of God is the basis of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about what our attitude should be toward God: **Matthew 6:19-21, 24-25, 33-34**. Jesus instructs us to trust God to provide for us and not to worry. But does this mean we are not to participate in God's work of providing for us? Not at all!

### Our status as developers of financial partners

1. **Numbers 18:21-24**: In contrast to the other tribes of Israel, the Levites did not receive from God any land as an inheritance. The Levites did not raise food for themselves on the land. Instead the other Israelites gave their tithes and offerings from the land to God, and God gave these gifts to the Levites as their livelihood. God organized the nation of Israel this way so that He could set aside—call—the Levites to special religious ministry, to take care of the arrangements that enabled the Israelites to worship Him. The Levites did not receive their livelihood from their fellow Israelites. Rather, their brothers and sisters gave to God, and GOD gave to the Levites.
2. Paul recognized that he had a status similar to the Levites.
  - a. In **1 Corinthians 9:9-14** he claims that pastors and evangelists such as himself have the right to receive their livelihood from gifts from the Lord's people. It is these gifts that enable pastors and evangelists to devote their time to ministry.
  - b. In **Philippians 4:18** Paul makes clear that there is no "linkage" between the gifts of the Lord's people to God, and God's use of these gifts for the livelihood of specially called servants of God like Paul.

## **Our attitude as developers of financial partners**

1. **Romans 15:23-27**: Paul was not afraid to ask for financial gifts for himself and others. (See also 1 Corinthians 16:1-6, 10-11.)

2. Paul refrained from asking for financial gifts from people if he believed they would not understand. Sometimes he supported himself as a tentmaker, but other times he received financial gifts from the Lord's people.

a. Corinthian church: **Acts 18:3-5; 1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 10:7; 11:7-9; 12:14-18**

b. Thessalonian church: **1 Thessalonians 2:5-9; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; Philippians 4:16**

c. Ephesian church: **Acts 20:33-35**

3. Paul considered partnership development an important means of blessing potential partners. His most complete teaching on this topic is found in **2 Corinthians 8-9**:

a. **8:1-7**: Partnership development invites/encourages partners to receive the gift of a generous heart and an opportunity to act upon it. (See also Philippians 4:10.)

b. **9:5-8**: It encourages financial partners to allow the gift of wholehearted generosity to extend into and facilitate many other good works besides financial giving. Notice here also that Paul used careful planning in his partnership development.

c. **9:10-11**: It encourages the transforming work of the Spirit of Christ in partners through obedience, especially in their attitude of thanksgiving and in their righteousness. (See also Philippians 4:17.)

d. **9:12-15**: It makes the generosity of God more visible, and the gospel more credible. This encourages believers to praise God, pray for one another (including donors), and practice generosity themselves. This also attracts non-believers to God. (See also Hebrews 13:15-16; 1 Peter 2:12.)

Question: What is the "indescribable gift" that Paul thanks God for in the culminating verse of 2 Corinthians 9:15?