

“Excel in Every Good Work” (Part 1)

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

When you enter Ashland, Kentucky, you will read a message on the side of a downtown building: “Ashland: A Proud Past. A Bright Future.” It is a coal mining town with forty percent of the population unemployed. Central Baptist Church was dying, and had gotten down to 9 people attending worship. They were discouraged. When Rob and Renee Parsons moved back to Ashland, some of the Central church members asked them to come and help their church. Renee started by giving people rides to places where they could get help. Out of meeting that need, Renee and her husband started Hope Central Ministry.

That ministry resurrected Central Baptist Church. The few active members made their church motto simple: “Serving the Lord.” The Hope Central Ministry help people in the community with food, clothes, jobs, and places to stay. Members excelled in their giving and serving. They taught people to plant vegetable gardens so that they could have fresh produce. Those who didn’t have a yard to plant a garden, the members of Central showed them how to plant a garden in a pallet, which they called “peace pallets.” They also have a community garden at their church property.

The person who now leads Hope Central Ministry is a former heroin addict and ex-con, Amber Sammons. When Amber came to Hope Central, she was homeless, suicidal,

and had no reason to live. The Central Baptist family took her in, told her about the love of Christ, and found her help. Over the years, they lovingly disciplined Amber, and she blossomed into a beautiful servant of Jesus Christ. She now oversees the Hope Central Ministry, knowing how to reach out and help those who turn to the Hope ministry. There are now over 50 people who worship on Sunday morning at Central Baptist Church. Renee Parsons, talking about reaching the Ashland community, said: “We wanted to give them what they didn’t have and that’s Jesus. That’s what we told them—He will supply all your needs.” [This is one of the compassion ministries that you support through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering]

Paul had asked the Corinthian Church to participate in a relief offering for Jewish believers in Jerusalem who were undergoing intense persecution. Paul encouraged this divided church to come together in this relief offering. He encouraged them to excel in their giving and serving. Paul said:

1. Excel in giving cheerfully (9:6-7)

“Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not reluctantly or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

- Our motivation in giving is our relationship with our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He showed compassion to us, and gave His life so that we could have eternal life. When we give, we should give cheerfully,

knowing that we will not only be helping others, but that we will be blessed ourselves. Paul said: *“...The person who sows generously will also reap generously”* (v. 6b). When you plant many seeds in the ground, you will reap more than you planted. That principle applies to our giving to the Lord.

- When you give, do it with a cheerful spirit. If you are giving out of guilt, or a grudge, or out of resentment, don't give. Wait and give when your heart and spirit are honoring to the Lord. Paul said, *“God loves a cheerful giver”* (v. 7b). Just as you honor God in other ways, honor Him in your giving.
- Warren Wiersbe said: “It seems strange that we Christians need encouragement to give, when God has given so much to us. Our greatest encouragement for giving is that it pleases the Lord.”

2. Excel in every good work (9:8)

“God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.”

- Someone reached out to you and brought you to Christ. Maybe it was several different people who God sent across your path to bring you to Him. They were doing their ministry to reach out to you. God wants you to use your ministry and reach out to others. He wants you to minister to them with the gifts, talents, and skills that His Spirit has given you.

- The members of Central Baptist Church minister to people in various ways—giving them rides, taking them to get specific help, showing them how to plant a vegetable garden, inviting them to church. They are using their knowledge and gifts to minister to those in need. They are excelling in *“every good work.”*
- God has graciously given you your life with the knowledge, experience, skills, and gifts that you have. He has made *“every grace overflow to you”* so that *“you may excel in every good work.”* What is your ministry? How are you using your life and ministry to help others? Don't waste what God has graciously given you. Ask Him to let you excel in your giving and in your ministry.

The beleaguered Jewish believers in Jerusalem were overwhelmed by the generosity of the Gentile believers. The Corinthian Church came together to help believers in need. Let us come together and excel in our giving and in our ministry.