

Generous

Week One: The Source of Generosity

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Living a generous life is grounded in a deep understanding of the gospel of grace given to us in Jesus. Because God has been generous to us in Christ, we gladly and freely live generously with others. Giving of ourselves is truly an act of worship, and like all worship, it is the heart behind the act which qualifies the act itself.

Sermon Notes:

The Privilege of Self-Giving

The Motivation for Self-Giving

The Heart of Self-Giving

Study Guide: The Source of Generosity

Read each of these passages at least three times this week:

- Old Testament reading: 1 Chronicles 29:10-19
- Psalm reading: Psalm 66
- Gospel reading: Luke 21:1-4
- New Testament reading: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

"The basis for giving to others is not what *they* have done or will do for us, but what God has already done for us in Christ. The foundation of giving is God's grace."¹

One of the first things that jumps out in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 is the way that Paul speaks about the generosity of the Macedonians.

Read vs. 1-7, and list the specific ways that Paul talks about giving:

In the language that Paul spoke, Greek, there is a single word that can be found throughout the first part of this passage — the word *charis*. *Charis* is most often literally translated "grace," but is also sometimes translated "joy," "favor," and "act of grace." The word, or some form of it, is found in vs. 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7. Re-read those verses now.

¹ Scott Hafemann, *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Corinthians* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000.), pg. 342

Charis is always the word for the grace of God toward His people, and it "will create *charismata*, or gifts, within them."² There are several passages that refer to the *charismata*. But look specifically at Romans 12:6-8. What gifts are listed?

Are you surprised to see "giving" on the list? While all are called to the grace of giving, some have been specifically gifted as givers! However, in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul taught about spiritual gifts and, in a very familiar passage, taught about the way they must be used.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. What kind of heart does Paul say must accompany the use of every spiritual gift?

This is certainly true with our giving! We can give a huge portion of our money but have a resentful heart, and that offering still isn't pleasing to God. However, a small gift given with the right motivation is a beautiful act of worship! Read these two stories from Jesus' life:

- Luke 7:36-50
- Luke 21:1-4

What characteristics do these two women have in common?

True giving of ourselves, either to God or to one another, comes out of a heart of love and heart of worship. It's also a heart that's first modeled clearly by Jesus. Go back to 2 Corinthians 8 and read vs. 8-9.

Now, read Philippians 2:5-8.

In both passages, Paul holds up several aspects of Jesus' life as worthy of imitation. Look back at both passages. To what sorts of behavior is Paul calling us?

Paul, however, is very clear that our giving shouldn't go beyond our means. Read 2 Corinthians 8:10-15. How might you summarize these verses?

² Paul Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians* (Intervarsity Press, Downer's Grove, IL, 1988.), pg. 142.

Now, read Jesus words in Luke 12:48. Think about all that you've been given in life: wealth, opportunities, talent, intellect, time, relationships, etc. Take a few minutes to consider this question: What might be expected of you?

Recommended Resources for this series:

- [Giving to God](#) by- Mark Allen Powell
 - [The Treasure Principle](#) by- Randy Alcorn
 - [Money, Possessions, and Eternity](#) by- Randy Alcorn
 - [More or Less](#) by- Jeff Shinabarger
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Use the following questions both for LIFE group and for personal application, journaling your answers or discussing with a partner.

Application and Facilitation

Week of May 18th, 2014

Welcome one another in Jesus' name!

Icebreaker: "What's your favorite chore to do around your house?"

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

- How have you seen Jesus at work in the last week or so?
- Do you see any of the following as a gift? (a) Giving your time, (b) giving your money, (c) giving your possessions, or (d) using your gifts to serve. Why or why not? Are your answers different in different areas? Why is that?
- Is it fair to "test" the genuineness of our love for Christ through our giving? Why or why not?
- What is "enough"? What resources should be considered as essentials?
- Are you comfortable with other people (non-family members) helping you to determine what's enough? Why or why not?
- Is the way we handle our money and resources dramatically different than the world around us? Why or why not?
- For you, what's the next step in living a generous life?

World: Part of what it means to live a generous life is to be generous with the truth of the gospel, quickly willing to share with others. This, of course, means that we need to overcome fear, discomfort, and our own pride. Pray very specifically for people in your life who you know need to encounter Jesus, either for the first time or in a new way. Pray that we as a group would be generous with them—either personally, or seeking to connect them with others within this group. Pray specifically for opportunities you might have over the summer to show the love of Jesus to them!

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Week Two: The Proof of Generosity

2 Corinthians 8:16 – 9:5

The testimony of our lives speaks far louder than the words of our mouth. Jesus makes it extremely clear: It's impossible for us to serve both God and material wealth. One must be subject to the other, and this reality must work out in practice, not simply in theory.

Integrity and Glory

Practical Theology

Study Guide: The Proof of Generosity

Read each of these passages at least three times this week:

- Old Testament reading: Genesis 12:1-9
- Psalm reading: Psalm 73
- Gospel reading: Luke 16:10-17
- New Testament reading: 2 Corinthians 8:16 – 9:5

“Paul’s extended motivational plea to the Corinthians to get on with the grace of giving [is] because their failure to do so would reveal their repentance to be vain and their salvation a delusion.”³

In a society that focuses so much on both money and on what can be gained from money, it’s difficult to step back and hear Paul’s heart for the church. He clearly recognizes that giving, and even more broadly, wealth, is not an *end* itself, but rather, a *means* to the *end*.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:16-24. Can you find the specific *end* that Paul describes? (*Hint: If you’re struggling to find it, look specifically at vs. 19 and again in vs. 23*)

Throughout Paul’s letters, he lists a variety of activities that flow through to this end. In fact, he seems to infer that the entirety of the way we relate to each other points that direction. As you look at the following Scriptures, what is the activity that Paul is describing, and what is the end to which it leads?

- Romans 15:7

³ R. Kent Hughes, *2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness*, (Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2006.), Kindle Location 3064.

- 1 Corinthians 10:31
- 2 Corinthians 4:15
- Philippians 1:11
- Philippians 2:11

This section (2 Corinthians 8-9) on the collection is actually an application of the previous section of Paul's letter, found in 2 Corinthians 7:2-16. Go back and read that section of Paul's letter.

2 Corinthians 7:10 acts as a kind of summary for that section. How would you paraphrase that verse?

Looking back at the section we are studying, the same concept can be found in 2 Corinthians 9:3. Can you find the parallel?

The word translated "prove empty" is the same root word found in 2 Corinthians 6:1. What is Paul saying in that verse?

Look up and paraphrase the following verses:

- Matthew 11:19b
- Luke 3:8a
- Ephesians 2:8-10
- James 2:18

What is the constant theme throughout these verses?

"Paul is pointing to two opposite ways of giving: the kind of generosity that flows from experiencing God's blessing, versus the kind of begrudging greediness that seeks to keep as much as possible."⁴ Read Luke 12:22-34; what does Jesus say to those who are anxious for what they have?

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Use the following questions both for LIFE group and for personal application, journaling your answers or discussing with a partner.

Application and Facilitation

Week of May 25th, 2014

Welcome one another in Jesus' name!

Icebreaker: "What's the worst job you've ever had?" (For kids, "worst chore you've ever had")

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: 2 Corinthians 8:16 – 9:5

- What's God been doing in your life?
- How do you decide where to give money?
- Other than God, what's someone or something that you might be likely to "serve" without intending to?
- How does the way we give money as Christians reflect the glory of God in the world?
- If someone you didn't know looked at your schedule, who or what would they say you served? What about your bank account and spending habits?
- Do you view giving as a joy or a burden? Why?
- What are some practical ways we can help one another keep moving in the joy of giving?

World: It's dramatically different to have an intellectual belief that people need to encounter Jesus and to live out that value in your life. Take time this week to consider whether that "value" ever translates to your daily life and attitude—do people and their eternity truly matter to you? Commit this week to praying the blessing of God into the life of one person that you are connected with, and pray for them daily. Then, commit to praying daily for one other person that is connected with someone else in your LIFE group. Ask God to make you a blessing in the world—not just in concept, but in reality!

Check www.yorkalliance.org or register for our weekly newsletter to get information on coming events and activities.

⁴ Scott J. Hafemann, *NIV Application Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000.), pg. 365.

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Week Three: The Gift of Generosity

2 Corinthians 9:6-10

The ability to live generously might be the single most under-utilized spiritual discipline in the Christian faith. Jesus clearly teaches us that, by treasuring something, our heart grows toward that thing. Through the gift of giving, we train our hearts to fall more deeply in love with Jesus, and giving becomes a joy.

Giving as Sowing

Giving as Reaping

Giving as Response

Questions? Text them to (717) 508-4441 or email questions@yorkalliance.org

Study Guide: The Gift of Generosity

Read each of these passages at least three times this week:

- Old Testament reading: Isaiah 58
- Psalm reading: Psalm 111 & 112
- Gospel reading: Matthew 6:19-21
- New Testament reading: 2 Corinthians 9:6-10

"The point isn't that how we spend our money *reveals* what sort of people we *are*, but that how we spend our money *determines* what sort of people we *become*."⁵

As Paul writes to the Corinthian church, squarely in the center of the "New Testament" in our Bibles as well as "new covenant" theology (understanding God through the lens of the love and sacrifice of Jesus), it's easy to forget that he was first an Old Testament scholar. Paul's writings are dense with references to the Hebrew Scriptures (what we call the "Old Testament"), and we can often understand them most fully by returning to the texts which he references.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-10. Now, read each verse in harmony with the OT reference that Paul likely had in mind as he wrote:

- 2 Corinthians 9:6 and Proverbs 11:24-28.
How would you summarize these five couplets in Proverbs?

⁵ Mark Allan Powell, *Giving to God* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI., 2006.) pg. 53.

- 2 Corinthians 9:7 and Deuteronomy 15:10.
What topic is the law addressing in Deuteronomy 15?

How is the "once every seven year" blessing expanded by Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:7? In the context of vs. 6, what is the frequency Paul infers for generous giving?

- 2 Corinthians 9:8 and Psalm 111.
While Psalm 111 isn't directly quoted, Psalm 112 will be quoted in the next section, and Paul seems to be giving attention to the flow of thought laid out by the Psalmist.⁶ Where does righteousness, supply, redemption, and wisdom come from according to Psalm 111?

How does this parallel 2 Corinthians 9:8?

- 2 Corinthians 9:9 and Psalm 112:9.
Reading all of Psalm 112, what is the reason for the generosity (and righteousness) cited in vs. 9? (*Hint: Look at vs. 1*)
- 2 Corinthians 9:10, Isaiah 55:10 and Hosea 10:12.
Looking at Isaiah 55 and Hosea 10 in context, are the promises Paul is citing primarily about the material or about the spiritual?

Recognizing the source of Paul's words give us a fuller insight into his intent in writing this brief but vitally important passage. His own words in two other letters, both written near the end of his life, help us to further understand his intent.

Read the heart of the passage, 2 Corinthians 9:8, once again. The word translated "sufficiency" (ESV) is found in at least two other places in Paul's writings:

- Read 1 Timothy 6:6 and Philippians 4:11. In both verses, this word is translated "contentment" or "content." What message do both verses convey?
- Now, go back to 2 Corinthians 9:8 and read it in the context of the passage. What is Paul saying about the material blessings that have been given to us as individuals? How does this relate to our giving?

⁶ Scott Hafemann, *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Corinthians* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000.), pg. 368.

A closing question: If we already have all we need, are we living like it?

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Use the following questions both for LIFE group and for personal application, journaling your answers or discussing with a partner.

Application and Facilitation

Week of June 1, 2014

Welcome one another in Jesus' name!

Icebreaker: "What activity do you feel draws you nearest to God?"

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: 2 Corinthians 9:6-10, Matthew 6:19-21

- How have you seen Jesus at work around you?
- Have you ever experienced a time when your spending changed your focus and the things you "loved"?
- Is the idea of giving as a spiritual discipline a helpful one? Why or why not?
- How is giving different from other spiritual disciplines? (i.e.—prayer, Bible reading, community, etc.)
- Does giving with the idea of "reward" make you uncomfortable? Why or why not?
- Have you ever experienced giving (financial or other types) as a pathway to understanding the will of God?
- How do we move out of the idea that having more money will make us happier? How might we help each other in that process? How might we actually hinder one another in that process?

World: Pray for those with whom you are connected in a practical way with intentionality. Don't simply go through the motions—ask God to bless them, and pray specifically about areas of their life in which you know that God might work! This week, find a prayer partner in your group and commit to praying for one another through the week. However, don't just pray for his/her personal needs. Rather, pray that your partner would be the hands and feet of Jesus in the marketplace, would be bold and loving in specific relationships, and would clearly hear the heart of God for the world around him/her.

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Week Four: The Way of Generosity

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

A right understanding of the world brings us to the realization that God is ultimately the owner of everything. We have been given charge of many things: our talents, passions, time, and material resources. However, we must not confuse the charge we've been given as ownership — God retains ownership and all that we "spend" must flow through that filter.

The Role of a Steward

The Pattern of a Steward

Questions? Text them to (717) 508-4441 or email questions@yorkalliance.org

Study Guide: The Way of Generosity

Read each of these passages at least three times this week:

- Old Testament reading: Haggai 1:2-11, 2:6-19
- Psalm reading: Psalm 50
- Gospel reading: Matthew 25:14-30
- New Testament reading: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

“Certainly [we] should never ‘check off the box’ as if giving 10 percent automatically fulfills the obligation. The 90 percent belongs to God, too. He doesn’t just look at what we give. He also looks at what we keep.”⁷

In our modern world, a “job well done” often translates to a promotion, a bonus, or at least some kind of public accolade. Our modern world, however, is so individualistic and independent that we can often miss the language of the Bible that clearly gives us a “job” in our relationship with God: the job of a steward.

Look at Psalm 24:1. How might you paraphrase that verse?

Based on this, what doesn't God own?

God's call, then, is for us to steward that which He's given to us. Read Matthew 25:14-30. What principles do you see at work in Jesus' parable?

⁷ Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*, (Multnomah, Colorado Springs, CO, 2001.), pg. 65.

Now, read 2 Corinthians 9:10-15. Paul clearly starts with the idea of God's ownership and our stewardship (vs. 10), and then promises us a reward for a "job well done." He summarizes the reward in vs. 10, but then expands on this summary in vs. 11-14. What are the rewards that God promises?

- Summary:
- _____ to God (vs. 11-12)
- _____ to God (vs. 13)
- _____ from the saints (vs. 14)

The last gift seems a bit unexpected but makes sense as we recognize Paul's focus on giving as a privilege and grace. How, then, are we to carry out the role of a steward that God has given to us? The Bible gives a broad framework—far larger than we can survey in a study like this. However, look at the following passages and note what they tell us about *how* we are to give of what God has entrusted to us:

- 2 Corinthians 9:7a
- 2 Corinthians 9:7b
- 2 Corinthians 9:7c
- 1 Corinthians 16:2
- 2 Corinthians 8:12-13
- 2 Corinthians 8:3, 9
- Romans 15:25-26

- 2 Corinthians 9:11-13

God has entrusted us with much, and He has also instructed us very clearly how we are to steward it. May we be faithful to with all He has given to us!

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Use the following questions both for LIFE group and for personal application, journaling your answers or discussing with a partner.

Application and Facilitation

Week of June 8, 2014

Welcome one another in Jesus' name!

Icebreaker: "What material possession do you prize the most?"

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, Matthew 25:14-30

- Where have you seen God working in the past week?
- Are there aspects of your life that you feel like you're more of an owner than a steward? (Some examples: finances, home "owner", parent, employee, schedule, hobbies, etc.)
- Do you tend toward the error of prosperity theology or poverty theology? Why is that?
- In what ways are you a good "manager" of God's stuff right now? In what ways do you need to improve?
- How can you move past the idea that having a little "more" will bring you greater contentedness?
- Are we able to be honest with one another about how we are doing as stewards? Why or why not?
- Does your giving (money, time, ability, etc.) look like worship? Why or why not?

World: We are moving into "Connect" week, with block parties on Tuesday and Wednesday (June 17 & 18) and Friday and Saturday (June 20 & 21). Talk as a group as to which party or parties makes the most sense for you to attend? Who might you invite and connect with during those parties? Pray that God would move in mighty ways simply through the gathering of His people, and pray that there would be a clear sense of the Spirit of God on His people. Plan to attend at least one party next week!

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