

Men's Sunday Night
The Book of 2 Corinthians
"Finding Strength in Weakness"
Lesson 7 – 2 Corinthians 8
"Gracious Giving"

Chapter 8 deals with the missionary offering Paul was receiving for the believers in Judea. In the early days of the church these Jewish believers had given up everything and had "*all things in common.*" It was a taste of the kingdom God promised to Israel. But when Israel was set aside and the church brought onto the scene, this communion died away, leaving these saints in great need. It was to them that Paul was taking this offering. While this chapter focuses primarily on a special missionary relief offering, it helps us grasp some of the principles and promises of Christian giving.

Spiritual giving is biblical giving. If Christians do not bring tithes and offerings to the local church, then their hearts are not in the ministry of the local church. Individual giving other than to the local church is certainly allowed, for Paul received help from many individuals but our first obligation is to the church where we fellowship and serve.

Christian giving does not depend on material circumstances so much as spiritual convictions. The believers in Macedonia were poor and going through suffering; yet because they loved Christ, they wanted to share in the offering. They did not say, "We must keep this for ourselves!" They were willing to give that others might be helped. They looked upon their giving as a grace. Christian giving flows from the heart, the spontaneous expression of love to Christ for His full and free salvation.

Paul was anxious that nobody accuse him of misusing these missionary funds, so he had the churches appoint three messengers to handle the money. They were Titus (vs. 16-17), another brother (vs. 18-19), and a third associate (v. 22). This is a good business practice. It is sad to see churches and Christian organizations handle funds in a nonbusiness like manner. All money should be receipted and recorded. No Christian or local church should send money to works that are not financially sound. The fact that "there is a need" is not reason enough for giving, there must be proof that the money is handled honestly and spent wisely. We are not obligated to pay a debt we never incurred.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-6. Pray and answer the following questions:

Many people consider chapter 8-9 of 2 Corinthians as one of the best teaching on the principles of financial stewardship. In this sense, stewardship is Christianese for “how you handle your money.” You wouldn’t think that the subject of money would be an issue in a discussion of finding your place in God’s plan. But it really is. Not because money matters to God (because it doesn’t), He already owns everything. He doesn’t need your or my money (contrary to what many Christian fundraisers would have you believe). He can accomplish whatever He wants with or without money. But God knows that money is important to us. If we are seriously interested in following His plan for our life, we must have a proper attitude about it.

1. Out of what circumstances did the Macedonian Christians give?
2. What attitude did the Macedonians have in their giving?
3. What three things did the Macedonian Christians do that impressed Paul? (8:3-5)
4. How have your views on giving changed over the years?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:7-15. Pray and answer the following questions:

Almost anyone can “love” people by speaking words. But when it comes time to express that love by lending a helping hand or writing a check, one can quickly determine the sincerity of a person’s love for others. That was Paul’s point in 2 Cor. 8. To illustrate it, he used the ultimate model of tangible love, Jesus Christ. Christ became poor in order to make us rich.

5. Why is Jesus the ultimate example of sacrificial giving?

6. How can the fact that Christ became poor on your behalf, and was later exalted by God, motivate you to follow His example?

7. How can the example of the Macedonian church challenge those who have little money to give?

8. What prevents people from giving a fair portion of their money to the Lord for His work?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:16-24. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul had already endured some unjust personal criticism for apparently using ministry as a guide to get rich. None of this was true, but it nonetheless was damaging to his reputation. And the reputation of the Christian always reflects on the reputation of Christ in the eyes of unbelievers and immature Christians. That's what Paul is worried about. He doesn't want anyone to have questions about the financial integrity of the offering collected for the saints in Jerusalem. These guidelines are great instruction for churches and ministries today. Paul now reveals a plan of accountability consisting of a delegation of men which will be responsible for the offering.

9. Why did Paul take extra care to do what was right in the eyes of others?

10. Describe the team that Paul is sending to the Corinthians.

11. Which of their qualities do you appreciate the most?

12. In what ways should we try to avoid criticism with the way we carry out our Christian responsibilities?

Journaling

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review and group discussion.
