

2 Corinthians 8:1-15 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. ⁶ Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷ But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. ¹⁰ And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. ¹¹ So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³ For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵ As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

2 Corinthians 8:1-15 | 15 Minutes on Giving

Today I have the pleasure of introducing Brad and Amber Jones. Brad and Amber have served the past ten years as missionaries to the Island nation of Vanuatu in the South Pacific Ocean, 500 miles off the coast of Australia. Today we will get to look through their personal story like a window, through which we will get to see the story of Christ’s enduring work to reconcile a people to himself from every nation, tribe, and tongue.

As a church we have had the privilege of participating in their story in a small way simply by offering a measure of financial support. I have several hopes for this morning.

1. Our vision would be expanded. Our church’s aim is in one sense very small. Much of our mission and decisions aim particularly to this neighborhood. Our hope is that this results in deep tangible investment and an honoring of the scope to which God has called us. But in this narrow focus, may we never create a mere local deity. We all only work locally, even Brad and Amber in Vanuatu, work with people to whom they made themselves local. But this local participation must also lift its gaze to the support of the work of the church outside of our purview, so that we might remember the cosmic scale and intention of Christ’s work on the cross. Everyone is sent from somewhere local. May we be the type of local that think in Kingdom terms.

2. Our mutual encouragement. Paul at the beginning of his letter to the Romans, which is a pretty good one, says this: *“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.”* (Ro 1:11-12) Part of our hope in giving to missionaries is that we might know them and that we might receive mutual encouragement. Leslie Newbigin who I quote frequently gives several recommendations for the western church at the end of one of his books here is the fifth: “As a fifth condition for a missionary encounter with our culture, I would list the necessity for help in seeing our own culture through Christian minds shaped by other cultures.” Newbigin wrote that in 1986, and I think it is more essential now then when he wrote it. (Of course I would think that, I didn’t exist in 1986).
3. Lastly my hope is that we give financially to their ministry. There is an absurd amount of blessing tied to that, so let me expound a bit on this section in 2 Corinthians.

1. Joy + Extreme Poverty = Wealth of Generosity

2 Corinthians 8:2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

Paul in this section is appealing to the Corinthian Church to fulfill a pledge they had made to give to support the struggling church in Jerusalem. The example that he gives to motivate them is the church in Macedonia. This is a wonderful example because the church in Macedonia was under persecution and extreme poverty. But look, their joy in the Lord outmatched their persecution and their poverty. Their poverty in fact had this ability to overflow into a wealth of generosity. Inspiring!

2. Present Abundance = Occassion for Generosity

2 Corinthians 8:8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

The second example to call the church to generosity is the pattern of Christ himself. Christ left the heavens to take on flesh and identify with earthly poverty so that through his love we might become rich. This is the pattern of the gospel. Therefore it is the way churches are meant to relate to other churches. And Christians to other Christians. That’s why Paul makes an appeal not a command. He can simply point to Jesus and tell other Christians to look. At which point we would all say, good point! Let’s be more like Jesus.

3. Present Abundance = Occassion for Generosity

2 Corinthians 8:13-14 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴your abundance at the

present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.

The church in Corinth was experiencing a season of abundance. Does that mean they are not in an occasion to give because their wealth cannot overflow like their poverty could? To quote Paul about Paul, “may it never be!” Paul loves to argue from the lesser to the greater. If it is true in this dire circumstance how much more is it true in this circumstance of blessing!

So here are some ideas.

You always have an opportunity to give to your church. Are you giving ten percent? Many of you are at the beginnings of your earning potential. If you don’t start now, I bet you won’t.

Secondly, you will have an opportunity to participate in the Jones’s support of the church in Vanuatu. Here are a couple of ideas.

1. Listen, and pray, and give according to God’s calling.
2. Do you have recurring giving set up at the church, but it doesn’t come out to ten percent? Round out your ten percent with recurring giving to the Jones’s.
3. Do you have multiple income streams? Tithe the second to the Jones’s.

Overcoming one objection: Is ten percent really a new testament requirement? Let’s say it isn’t. But instead it is a principle that we see throughout the corpus of scripture. So I’ll ask? You got a better idea?