

PRODIGAL

CHURCH II

A SERIES IN 2 CORINTHIANS



PRODIGAL CHURCH (SEASON 2) - GRACE IS GENEROUS GIFT-GIVING

Community Group Study Guide 2 Corinthians 8:1-24 – Week of November 7, 2021

Introduction

- So many Christians miss out on God's greatest blessings because they don't listen. They view God's word like "some people wrote some things to other people." They tune in when something is interesting and tune out when it's not interesting.
- The weapons that the enemy wages against us are weapons of mass distraction. He says things that are so obvious as Christians that we miss because we're so distracted. The blessing that most Christians are missing out on is the blessing of generosity. Jesus said in Acts 20:35, "It's more blessed to give than to receive."
- In this sermon we're discussing "wealth" in terms of presence and presents.
- Context: Paul is talking about a collection for the church in Jerusalem (See 1 Cor. 16:1-4). The gathering of the collection was to build a fund for the poor Christians in Jerusalem, and to build a bond between the Jewish and Gentile churches. He mentions that Titus mentioned that there had been little progress in gathering a collection for the poor in Jerusalem. After Titus assured Paul of the Corinthians' loyalty to the Lord and to him, Paul feels free to bring up this matter of the collection again.

1. Grace is (1-6)

- v1-2: Christian giving is not measured in terms of the size of the gift, but the sacrifice and love that lies behind it.
- "Grace" is unmerited favor from God. Generosity starts with receiving God's grace; once you receive it, you desire to be generous. The Macedonians were extremely poor, but, as recipients of God's grace, they were rich in joy and heart. This inspired them to give sacrificially and joyfully from their (little) wealth.
- Do you have a vision for your life to be generous? What steps are you taking to make your vision a reality
- v3-5: Paul writes a long, run-on sentence because he is so excited about the generosity of the Macedonian church. It was the church, not Paul who did the begging to give. The poor Macedonians actually begged for the opportunity to give to the church in Jerusalem.
- Any area of need in another person's life is an opportunity to be generous.
- The least that we can do for somebody is take time to pray for them. We need to pray for pastors and their families, staff, members, and a church building.
- v6: Titus, carrying Paul's letter back to Corinth, was charged to oversee the collection in the Corinthian church.

2. Generous (7-9)

- v7-9: Generous giving is as important to the Christian life as faith, speech and knowledge. We're to excel in it as an expression of our thanksgiving for God's grace toward us.
- Generosity is not tithing, but giving more than a tithe. See Matthew 23:23.
- People spend money on things that we love.
- Christian men should build themselves up as responsible men of God, and generously cover costs of dates with a potential wife. Christian women should check their pride and allow men to pay for them.
- Mooches don't have many friends.
- "Act of grace" (v6,7,19): Grace is a gift. Gift-giving is at the heart of Christianity. Do you excel in this act of grace? We are to give to prove our love (v8).
- v9: The rich, eternal Son of God took on flesh, and became poor, for our sake, so that we could become rich in him.
- Jesus "was/is" rich. If you have a vision for generosity, knowing this helps. It makes it easier to

DISCUSSION GOALS

Head

To understand that recipients of God's grace should be extremely generous.

Heart

To long for opportunities to be generous.

Hands

To position our lives so that we can grace others with our presence and presents abundantly and sacrificially in this life.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next **Baptism Seminar** will be at **1pm on November 14**. Sign up here:

brookline.mosaicboston.com/baptism

Sign up [here](#) to volunteer to help with the preparations, setup and teardown for our **December 4 (at 6pm) Members' Meeting**.

Sign up to join a **service team** here: <https://brookline.mosaicboston.com/serve>.

be generous...unless you're in love with money.

- It is not inherently wrong to be rich or poor. Jesus was both; he became poor so, by his poverty, we might become rich.
- In return for becoming poor, what does Jesus want in return? He wants us to appreciate the gift, to say thank you, to glorify him, and worship him.
- Grace is a gift. It is free. But it's free because someone paid for it.
- Generosity to others is the embodiment of Christ's embodiment. You incarnate Christ's generosity through your generosity.
- The most generous thing that we can do to someone is to give them the greatest gift. We need to share the gospel with them. Gospel demonstration to someone should go hand-in-hand with gospel proclamation. We can't use actions of generosity as excuses to not share the gospel. Speaking the gospel is the most compassionate, empathetic, kind, and generous thing that we can do.

Gift-giving (10-24)

- v10-11: The Corinthians were excited about the idea, in a theoretical sense, of giving to the church in Jerusalem in an initial wave of excitement, but they struggled to actually part with their money when it came time to do so.
- v12: Paul doesn't care about the amount of the gift.
- v12-14: Paul wants those who are enjoying a measure of prosperity to see their responsibility to relieve the suffering of brothers and sisters.
- v15: The principle of equity among the people of God, from Exodus 16:18, is cited. Those who could gather would gather for the elderly and sickly in the community, but each received the same to eat. Those who tried to hoard manna were found out because the manna would spoil. Paul isn't talking about an economic system, but about Christian love and good works. There's always more from the abundance that come from the Lord.
- Christians should gather more than they need so that they can be generous. The gleaning laws of the OT give us a sense of how God's people did this in the past.
- v16-18: Though Paul was generous himself, he speaks about the generosity of others.
- v19: Paul wants a representative from the church to be present to deliver the gift to the church in Jerusalem in order to seal the bond between Jewish and Gentile Christians.
- v20-21: Paul assures the Corinthians that the money would be used specifically for its designated purpose. He didn't want any hint of malfeasance associated with the gospel of Christ.
- v22-24: Paul instructs the Corinthians to give proof to the other churches of their love.
- Conclusion: Pastor Jan's father's generous acts to a man led the man to act generously toward him, ultimately leading to the immigration of Pastor Jan's family from the Soviet Union to the United States.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-24

1. Can someone explain Paul's change in subject to generosity in this section?
2. What were the main points of the sermon?
3. What was the condition of the churches in Macedonia? What did they have in abundance that inspired their generosity?
4. **Read verse 9.** How did Jesus model the grace of giving for the church?
5. Were there any insights about Christian wealth, giving or generosity in the sermon that were new or convicting to you?
6. **Read verse 7.** Paul instructs his readers to "excel in this act of grace (of generosity)" like they would seek to do in faith, speech, knowledge, and earnestness. How does thinking about generosity in relation to these other areas compel you to change your approach to giving given Paul's command?
7. How can you give your presence to others more generously?
8. What typically lies behind one's inability or struggle to be a recipient of grace and/or generosity from others? Do you see this struggle in any areas or relationships in your life?
9. What are some of the greatest lessons and blessings that you have received while seeking to be generous?