

BGCC Community Group Guide



Character of The Church

August 23rd

The Generous Church

2 Corinthians 8-9

Section 1 – Grace Given to Us Produces Generosity in Us

2 Corinthians 8:1–5

“Their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up into rich generosity.”
— 2 Corinthians 8:2

Summary

Paul begins by telling the Corinthian church about the churches in Macedonia—churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. These churches were experiencing trials and extreme poverty, yet their circumstances did not keep them from being generous. Instead, their joy and poverty “welled up” into generosity.

Their generosity was not simply about having extra money. They were deeply moved by the needs of other believers and actually pleaded for the privilege of participating in helping the Lord's people. They gave as much as they were able and even beyond what might have been expected.

This generosity was ultimately rooted in the grace they had received from Jesus. They had first given themselves to the Lord, and their generosity flowed out of that relationship.

The situation Paul describes also had a much larger purpose. The predominantly Gentile churches were helping Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who were suffering through famine and persecution. Their generosity created unity within the church, strengthened the work of the gospel, demonstrated the love of Christ to the watching world, and ultimately resulted in praise and thanksgiving to God.

The pattern Paul presents throughout these chapters is:

Grace/generosity given to us by God -> produces generosity in us -> becomes generosity through us -> leads to thanksgiving, praise, and worship to God.

Group Question: Why do you think the Macedonian churches were able to be so generous even while experiencing poverty and severe trials?

Personal Relevance

Our generosity begins with recognizing what God has already given us. The Christian life does not begin with, “What can I give God?” It begins with, “Look at what God has already given me.”

We have received grace, forgiveness, salvation, mercy, and love through Jesus. When that reality moves from something we know intellectually to something that truly sinks into our hearts, it changes us. Generosity is therefore not primarily about how much we have. It is about what God's grace has done in us.

A person who understands God's grace begins to see opportunities differently. Instead of asking, “What can I afford to give?” or “What do I have left over?”, we begin asking, “How can I use what God has given me to love someone else?”

Flow Question: When you think about everything God has given you, what most naturally produces gratitude in you?

Reflection Question: Is there an area where you have been focused on what you lack rather than recognizing what God has already given you?

Section 2 – A Generous Church Gives with Integrity and Intention

2 Corinthians 8:8–12; 8:16–24; 9:1–5

“For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.”

— 2 Corinthians 8:12

Summary

Paul makes something very clear: **generosity is not a command that is forced upon people.**

He tells the Corinthians that he is not commanding them to give. Instead, he wants their generosity to demonstrate the sincerity of their love. They had already expressed a desire to help, and Paul is giving them an opportunity to follow through on that desire.

He also reminds them of Jesus:

“Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”
— 2 Corinthians 8:9

The ultimate example of generosity is Jesus Himself. Christ gave Himself for us.

Paul also takes great care to make the collection transparent and trustworthy. Titus and two other brothers are sent to help collect the offering. Paul wants the Corinthians to know that their gift will be handled responsibly and that there will be witnesses and accountability. This gives us two important characteristics of a generous church:

A generous church gives with integrity.

It handles resources honestly, transparently, and responsibly.

A generous church gives with intention.

Generosity is prayed over and planned. It is not the result of manipulation, pressure, or emotional arm-twisting or strategy.

Paul wants the Corinthians to give willingly, according to what they actually have—not according to what they do not have.

Group Question: Why do you think integrity and transparency are especially important when a church handles money and other resources?

Personal Relevance

Generosity does not mean giving blindly. God's people should be trustworthy stewards of what He has entrusted to them. That means we should be willing to ask questions, seek wisdom, pray about our giving, and make intentional decisions about how we use our resources. It also means the church should handle people's generosity with integrity. People should be able to trust that their gifts are being handled responsibly and used for the purposes they were given.

But intentional generosity also means we should not wait until an emotional moment to decide what we will give. We can pray ahead of time. We can talk with our spouse. We can consider what God has entrusted to us and ask Him how He wants us to use it.

The goal is not to pressure people into giving. The goal is for people to respond willingly to God's grace.

Flow Question: What are some ways that planning and praying ahead of time could change the way we approach generosity?

Reflection Question: Have you ever thought intentionally about how God wants you to use the resources He has entrusted to you—your money, time, abilities, possessions, or influence?

Section 3 – Generosity Produces Joy and Thanksgiving

2 Corinthians 9:6–14

“Whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”
— 2 Corinthians 9:6

Summary

Paul uses the familiar picture of planting and harvesting to explain generosity. A farmer cannot plant one tomato plant and expect to have enough tomatoes to feed his family all winter. What we sow produces a harvest.

But Paul is **not** teaching prosperity theology. He is not saying that if you give God \$100, God will give you \$1,000 in return. The “harvest” Paul is describing is much bigger than financial gain. The harvest is what God produces through generosity: lives impacted, needs met, people encouraged, compassion demonstrated, relationships strengthened, the gospel advanced, and ultimately thanksgiving and praise directed toward God.

Paul says:

“God loves a cheerful giver.”
— 2 Corinthians 9:7

God cares deeply about the heart behind the gift. Giving is personal, intentional, willing, and cheerful. It is not supposed to be reluctant or forced. It’s how we show affection to Him.

God also promises to provide what His people need so that they can “abound in every good work.” His provision is not given so that we can become completely self-sufficient and independent from everyone else. His provision equips us to serve others. We are enriched so that we can be generous. And that generosity ultimately produces thanksgiving to God.

Group Question: What do you think Paul means by “reaping generously”? Why is this different from the idea that God will simply give us more money if we give more money?

Personal Relevance

Generosity brings joy because we get to participate in what God is doing. Matthew illustrated this through the story of a family who helped a young man attend a school of worship when he could not afford it. Years later, seeing that man leading worship and serving the church brought that family joy. They were not sitting around thinking about the money they had spent. They were thinking about what God had done through their generosity.

That is the harvest Paul is talking about. Sometimes generosity looks like money. Sometimes it looks like time, patience, compassion, listening, encouragement, skills, service, presence, or simply showing up for someone.

The question is not merely, “What can I give?” The deeper question is: **“What has God given me that He can now use through me?”**

Flow Question: Think of a time when you were generous toward someone. What made that experience joyful or meaningful?

Reflection Question: What is something God has given you—time, money, abilities, relationships, experience, compassion, or something else—that you could intentionally use to bless someone else?

Section 4 – Generosity Ultimately Leads Us Back to Jesus

2 Corinthians 9:11–15

“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”
— 2 Corinthians 9:15

Summary

Paul brings the entire discussion back to worship. The generosity of the Corinthians would meet real needs, but it would do more than that. Their generosity would cause people to praise God. Others would see their obedience to the gospel and their generosity toward God's people and respond with thanksgiving. Generosity becomes a visible expression of the gospel. People glorify God when they see His character reflected through His people.

Paul's final statement in this section is therefore not, “Now go give more.” It is: **“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”** The entire conversation about generosity ultimately points back to Jesus.

Paul is not asking the Corinthians to become generous so they can earn God's favor. He is inviting them to respond to the grace they have already received. Jesus was rich, yet became

poor for us. He gave Himself for us. He forgave us. He loved us when we were far from Him. He served us when we could never repay Him.

- So we give because **He gave to us.**
- We serve because **He serves us.**
- We love because **He first loved us.**
- We forgive because **He has forgiven us.**

Grace given to us produces generosity in us, which becomes generosity through us, resulting in thanksgiving and praise to God.

Group Question: How does remembering Jesus' generosity toward us change the way we think about being generous toward others?

Personal Relevance

Christian generosity is ultimately an act of worship. We are not trying to purchase God's favor. We are not trying to prove ourselves. We are not trying to make God love us more. We give because we have already received the greatest gift imaginable.

The gospel tells us that Jesus gave Himself for sinners. His grace is not something we earned, and His forgiveness is not something we can repay. When we recognize how much grace we have received, gratitude begins to overflow. And gratitude naturally begins looking for ways to love others.

The goal is not simply to become a church that gives away more money. The goal is to become a church whose generosity makes the character of Jesus visible. A generous church should cause people to say: “**God must be doing something here.**” And ultimately: “**Thanks be to God.**”

Flow Question: What is the difference between giving because you feel pressured to give and giving because you are genuinely grateful for what Jesus has done for you?

Reflection Question: Are there areas of your life where you need to move from obligation to gratitude? What would generosity motivated by gratitude look like for you this week?

Conclusion

2 Corinthians 9:15

Paul's teaching on generosity does not ultimately point us toward our wallets. **It points us toward Jesus.** The Macedonian churches demonstrate what grace can produce in ordinary people. They had severe trials and extreme poverty, yet their joy welled up into generosity. The Corinthians were challenged to respond willingly and intentionally to God's grace. Their giving was to be handled with integrity, transparency, and accountability.

Paul reminded them that generosity produces a harvest—not merely of financial resources, but of changed lives, fulfilled needs, strengthened relationships, gospel advancement, joy, and thanksgiving to God. And then he brings everything back to the greatest gift: **“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”**

Jesus is the reason the church can be generous. He gave Himself for us. He became poor so that we could become rich in Him. He loved us when we were far from Him. He forgave us when we did not deserve forgiveness. And because we have received such grace, we can become people who freely give grace to others.

A generous church is therefore not simply a church that gives a lot.

A generous church is a church that has been so deeply changed by God's grace that generosity begins to overflow from its people.

As you leave today, consider these questions:

- What has God already given me that I have been treating as though I earned it myself?
- Is my generosity motivated by pressure, obligation, recognition, or gratitude?
- Am I intentionally praying about how God wants me to use my resources?
- Do I give with integrity and transparency?
- What could I give—*money, time, skills, compassion, patience, presence, or encouragement*—to someone who needs it?
- Who could experience God's love through my generosity this week?
- When I think about all that God has given me, does it lead me to say, **“Thank you, Jesus”?**

- **We give because He gave to us.**
- **We serve because He serves us.**
- **We love because He first loved us.**
- **And everything ultimately leads us back to Jesus.**

“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”