

Message for 2 Corinthians 8-9:9 Notes for small groups

Background --> Remember in the book of Acts when the church was formed in Jerusalem they started a type of communal living thing and people were selling possessions and land and bringing the money to the leaders and they were meeting needs with the generosity from some of the believers who had excess to share. Well at some point those funds ran out and the needs in the church kept coming. That's the thing about needs is unless there's some sort of sustainability of income set up, the needs just keep coming. So the church in Jerusalem after time found itself in bad financial shape, they were the poor saints in Jerusalem – they became very poor and very much in need. Paul had it on his heart to take up an offering from the Corinthian church to help the church in Jerusalem, and he is going to spend his time in chapter 8 and on into 9 talking about this offering to be collected, and how to collect it, and talking about generosity and “the grace of giving” in general.

So Paul is talking to the Corinthians believers about the financial gift he is collecting for the Jerusalem Church and he challenges them by using the Macedonian church as an example and he says he wants them to know about the “grace that was given” to the Macedonian believers. The word is Charis in the greek

Grace – often we define it as unmerited favor, unearned blessing, mercy = not getting what we deserve, grace = God giving us what we don't deserve. All that's true, but grace is used differently here, it is used as a God given, God driven ability, gift, or power working through us. So we are talking specifically here about the God given power of giving working in our lives. It's something that God empowers us to do.

When it comes to giving, the real issue isn't giving money, it's have we really given ourselves to the Lord? If we have truly given our lives to Jesus, giving of our resources to the Kingdom purposes will naturally flow out of that.

Jesus was forever the most wealthy being in the universe as God the Son, eternally enjoying the wealth, power, and majesty as God in the ivory palaces of heaven, and when He added humanity to His divinity at the incarnation (His birth as a human) He added poverty to His existence (just as adding humanity to His divinity did not cause Him to lose His divinity, adding poverty did not cause Him to lose His eternal riches), He was born into a simple, hardworking, poorer earthly family. He had the power and authority to live as the most powerful, rich man that ever lived, and instead He chose to live in humble, poor circumstances... and yet inside, in His inner man, He was the richest man that ever lived, eternally rich. What did Jesus becoming poor do for us? He showed us that God's heart is to give, He showed us that material things really aren't that important compared to eternal things, He showed us that Jesus is available for everyone of every social class, He showed us that the way to God involves humility, and somehow in God's will and plan, Jesus becoming poor made our salvation possible, through His poverty and everything involved in His poor life on earth we can become really stinking rich, we get to share in His eternal wealth because He shared in our poverty.

Randy Alcorn's Treasure Principle Keys are great for discussion in small groups, they are: 1) God owns everything, I'm His money manager. 2) My heart always goes where I put God's money. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 3) This world is not my home, I am a sojourner through this land, heaven is my home. 4) I should live today not for the vapor (this life) but for the eternal. 5) Giving is the only antidote to materialism --> It dethrones me and exalts God. 6) God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving.--> He gives us more money than we need so we can give generously