



GOSPEL-CENTERED GIVING IS A SACRIFICIAL JOURNEY

October 21, 2018

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ALG LEADER'S GUIDE

2 Corinthians 8-9

WEEK THREE: GOSPEL-CENTERED GIVING IS A SACRIFICIAL JOURNEY

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BEGIN YOUR TIME TOGETHER BY ASKING YOUR LIFE GROUP TO OPEN THEIR BIBLES TO THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE (2 CORINTHIANS 8-9). SINCE THE PASSAGE IS TWO CHAPTERS, DETERMINE THE VERSES YOU WOULD LIKE TO READ. THIS IS THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION.

8 Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. 2 They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. 3 For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. 4 They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. 5 They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do. 6 So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. 7 Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us — I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving. 8 I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches. 9 You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. 10 Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. 11 Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. 12 Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have. 13 Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. 14 Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal. 15 As the Scriptures say, "Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough." 16 But thank God! He has given Titus the same enthusiasm for you that I have. 17 Titus welcomed our request that he visit you again. In fact, he himself was very eager to go and see you. 18 We are also sending another brother with Titus. All the churches praise him as a preacher of the Good News. 19 He was appointed by the churches to accompany us as we take the offering to Jerusalem — a service that glorifies the Lord and shows our eagerness to help. 20 We are traveling together to guard against any criticism for the way we are handling this generous gift. 21 We are careful to be honorable before the Lord, but we also want everyone else to see that we are honorable. 22 We are also sending with them another of our brothers who has proven himself many times and has shown on many occasions how eager he is. He is now even more enthusiastic because of his great confidence in you. 23 If anyone asks about Titus, say that he is my partner who works with me to help you. And the brothers with him have been sent by the churches, and they bring honor to Christ. 24 So show them your love and prove to all the churches that our boasting about you is justified.

9 I really don't need to write to you about this ministry of giving for the believers in Jerusalem. 2 For I know how eager you are to help, and I have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that you in Greece were ready to send an offering a year ago. In fact, it was your enthusiasm that stirred up many of the Macedonian believers to begin giving. 3 But I am sending these brothers to be sure you really are ready, as I have been telling them, and that your money is all collected. I don't want to be wrong in my boasting about you. 4 We would be embarrassed — not to mention your own embarrassment — if some Macedonian

believers came with me and found that you weren't ready after all I had told them! 5 So I thought I should send these brothers ahead of me to make sure the gift you promised is ready. But I want it to be a willing gift, not one given grudgingly. 6 Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. 7 You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." 8 And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need, and plenty left over to share with others. 9 As the Scriptures say, "They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever." 10 For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. 11 Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. 12 So two good things will result from this ministry of giving — the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. 13 As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. 14 And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. 15 Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!

- ASK YOUR LIFE GROUP IF ANYONE WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WHICH DEVOTION FROM WEEK TWO ENCOURAGED AND/OR CHALLENGED THEM THE MOST.

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC OF DISCUSSION

The fundamental idea behind Gospel-Centered Giving is rooted in and reflects the generosity of God.

1. **When have you felt the strongest sense of community at our church? During what time in your life were you most in need of help from other people? Who helped you out during that situation? What was your relationship with that person/people like? On the other hand, when have you been most helpful to a friend in need? What motivated you to lend a hand?**

UNDERSTANDING THE LESSON THROUGH GROUP INTERACTION

Lead your Life Group in a biblical discussion by working through the following questions.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

Sacrificial generosity was a practice of the church established at its very conception, and in these verses from 2 Corinthians we read Paul's reminder to the Corinthian church that generosity should be fundamental in their ministry to one another. Paul told the Corinthians about the generosity of the Macedonian churches who — despite their own poverty — had raised money for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Even though they were poor, they gave generously because the Christian community was in need.

- 2. What are you most likely to sacrifice for the sake of others — time or money? Why? What do you learn about the Macedonians from their giving? What amazed Paul about their giving? What "grace" had God given to the Macedonian Christians?**

The giving discussed in 2 Corinthians 8 was a special offering, not the regular church offering, and it was collected to meet a special need. Paul had hoped the Christians in Macedonia would support the offering. But because of their own deprived circumstances, he evidently did not expect they would give very much. Their giving was spontaneous and voluntary, fueled by grace, not by pressure.

- 3. What principles about giving do you observe in this passage? Why is it significant that the Macedonians gave both "according to" and "beyond" their ability?**

The Macedonians knew what it was to be in need because they had experienced poverty — yet they gave most generously. Anyone can be generous. But for Christians, we have no choice — the love of Christ should compel us to take care of each other.

- 4. In what ways does taking care of each other strengthen community? What do we communicate to people at our church or in our group when we sacrifice our time, money or other resources to meet their needs? Why is it important for you, as an individual Christian, to be generous? Why is it important for the church as a collective body to be generous?**

Generous giving is a ministry, and ministry requires faithful and generous giving. It was this ministry that the Macedonians shared. They saw their giving as a partnership with other believers to help with the needs of the saints, a preferred description of Paul's for followers of Christ.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:9.

This verse reveals what should motivate all believers to willingly sacrifice of themselves for the sake of others in the community — Jesus' sacrifice for us. Jesus practiced and taught sacrificial giving. Gratitude for what Jesus has done for us motivates us to demonstrate responsible stewardship of our lives and our possessions.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

Paul sought to help the Corinthians gain the proper perspective on giving. He realized they needed to move beyond their good intentions to action because the time to deliver the offering to Jerusalem was drawing near. Paul hoped to lead the Corinthians to give as a ministry and to set a positive Christian example.

5. **What words in these verses describe attitudes toward giving that God will honor? What words describe attitudes God will not honor? Which words best describe the giving culture of our church? How does your attitude affect your giving? What is the result of giving reluctantly or because someone compelled you to do so? How did Paul instruct the Corinthians to become more cheerful givers?**

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

6. **How should God's ultimate gift to us compel us to give? What can you do to keep this truth in your thoughts this week? How do you know if your giving is truly generous? How can our group hold each other accountable to being truly joyful and generous in our giving to the work of God?**
7. **How do we say "YES" to living the generous life with all we are and all we have?**

CLOSE YOUR LIFE GROUP IN A TIME OF PRAYER

Pray that God would continually remind your group that giving should be done cheerfully, not reluctantly. Also pray that our stewardship would ultimately glorify God and bring others into His kingdom.

REMINDER TO YOUR LIFE GROUP

Encourage your group to finish the 21-day Spiritual Journey by working through the final week of devotions.