

Paradox - Abundance Through Poverty

Ice Breaker: What was the worst item/scheme you've ever lost your money?

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. (2 Cor. 8:1)

- **Paradox of wealth: harsh poverty fueled abundant generosity** – “Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.” (2 Cor. 8:2) - The poor give at a higher percentage than the those not poor, why do you think that is? Also, why do you think poor and afflicted people are generally more joyful and generous?

Grace giving...

- **Doesn't give out of what I can spare** – “For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.” (2 Cor. 8:3a) – Circle what best describes you; 1) I give as I am able or 2) I give beyond my ability. How can someone give *beyond their ability*? What must be true in order for that to happen?
- **Doesn't give because I'm pressured** – “Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.” (2 Cor. 8:3b-4) – After reading this verse, do you truthfully see giving as a privilege? Why or why not

¶ **Grace giving isn't simply an issue of my finances, it's an issue of God's family** – “This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.” (2 Cor. 9:12)

- **Is anchored in the example of Jesus** – “I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” (2 Cor. 8:8-9)

¶ **Jesus didn't give out of His riches, He gave away His riches** – “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Phil. 2:6-7)

- **Completes the commitment** – “Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.” (2 Cor. 8:11) – What you commit is between you and God and nobody else. TVC will not pressure you in this. What can you commit to and can you do it despite whatever circumstances may arise and do it consistently?
- **Is measured by the size of the heart, not the size of the gift** – “For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.” (2 Cor. 8:12) – Fill in the blanks in order to test your heart: What thing do you always set aside money for no matter what, _____? Is that thing something other than your generosity to the Lord's work? In other words, would you rather cut out _____ or your giving when times are tough?

¶ **My personal checkbook is a theological document** – “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt. 6:21)

But just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving. (2 Cor. 8:7)

Your net worth doesn't equal your self worth. Don't let money compete for your heart, give your heart to God and give your treasures generously. How can you change something in that regard starting today?