

The Grace of Giving
“Making Good on Good Intentions”
Growth Group Discussion
2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Opening Questions (choose one or two, and get everyone involved in discussion):

- What is your favorite holiday movie or theater production?
- Do you know anyone who resembles Ebenezer Scrooge, from *A Christmas Carol*? (Don't name names!) What effect does their presence have on you when you are around them?
- To what degree does your desire to be generous line up with your actual giving? (On a scale of 1 to 10, a “1” would be totally misaligned, whereas a “10” would mean that your desire lines up perfectly with your actual giving).

1. Read 2 Cor. 9:1-5, then discuss the following.

- *Context review: The context for this conversation is a collection that Paul is taking up to meet the financial needs of impoverished Christians in Jerusalem. The Corinthians have expressed a desire to give, but they haven't come through with an actual gift.*
- What do you notice here about the way Paul talks about one church to another church? (Compare with what he does in 8:1-5).
 - Can you think of someone whose lavish generosity spurs you to be generous? Please share!
- In v. 5, we learn that Paul is sending some brothers in advance of his visit, to help the Corinthians make preparations to give when he arrives. What is his rationale for why this advance preparation is necessary?
 - In your own life, when you are presented with an opportunity for monetary giving, what is your initial, gut response?
 - Based on your own life, does your response differ if you have had time to prepare in advance, as opposed to being surprised?
 - Pastor Josh mentioned that the word translated, “generous gift,” is *eulogia*, or “blessing.” How can the opportunity to give be perceived as a blessing, as a result of advance preparation?
- What else stands out to you from this passage?

2. The big idea that Pastor Josh presented on Sunday was that generous giving starts with strategic preparation. Discuss this principle as follows.

- How important to you is spontaneity in life? Or to put it differently, in what scenarios is spontaneity a high value?
- What role, if any, should spontaneity play in giving?
- Read Galatians 4:4-5; 1 Peter 1:18-20; and Acts 2:22-23.
 - What do these passages suggest about the sacrificial gift of Jesus, with respect to advance planning?
 - Why does it matter that Jesus' saving act was planned from eternity past?

- How do you feel about the principle of planning your giving strategically, in advance?
- In what way does strategic planning enable you to give with more freedom, generosity, and joy, than giving without advanced planning?
- To what degree do you feel that advance planning to give is less worthy or less worshipful than spontaneous giving? How does this idea relate with the practice of scheduled, online giving?
 - If you schedule a regular, online gift, what practices enable you to keep an attitude of worship in this practice?
- How do you feel about the principle of a tithe—a regular gift of 10% of your income—going to your local church?
 - Pastor Josh shared we can see this pattern in Scripture: approximately 10% of a faith community's income is necessary to supply the needs of the ministries God has birthed in that community. Have you considered this principle before? How does it strike you?
- Josh also hinted at the concept of a “graduated” tithe—where you give an increasing percentage income to God's purposes as your income increases. How do you feel about this concept?
- How can advance planning help you be prepared for unexpected opportunities to give? Do you have any examples you can share?

PRAYER:

- Take time to share about and pray for any other needs that exist in your group.
- Pray about how God wants each of you to respond to this study. Is there, perhaps, some way that God might lead your group collectively to give toward a specific need?