

The Grace of Giving
“Bad Math”
Growth Group Discussion
2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Opening Questions (get everyone involved in discussion):

- On a scale of 1-10, how comfortable are you talking about your personal finances with this group? (1 is very uncomfortable, and 10 is extremely comfortable). Elaborate on why you chose your score, if possible.
- Why do you think that the topic of personal finance is so “taboo” in our culture?
- Do you think that we should be more willing to discuss this topic in church circles? Why or why not?

1. Read 2 Cor. 8:1-7, then discuss the following.

- *The context for this conversation is a collection that Paul is taking up to meet the financial needs of impoverished Christians in Jerusalem.*
- What do you know about the Macedonian churches? (I.e., the Philippians, Thessalonians, and Bereans).
- In vv. 2-5, Paul tells the Corinthian readers about the generosity of the Macedonian Christians. What do you make of the “math” in v. 2? How is it possible for overflowing joy and extreme poverty to well up in rich generosity?
- In v. 4, Paul says that the Macedonians even pleaded for the privilege of giving money to his collection. Why would anyone plead for the opportunity to give?
 - The word translated “privilege” (NIV) is the Greek word “karis,” normally translated “grace.” Why can the human act of giving be considered a “grace?”
 - On Sunday, Pastor Josh said that when we give, we get to experience even more grace. How does this work in practice?
- In vv. 6-7, we see Paul’s intention. What does he want the Corinthians to do?
 - Again we see the act of monetary giving described as an act of grace. What does this wording teach us about our experience of giving?
 - The word “excel,” used twice in v. 7, literally means “overflow.” How can the act of giving be viewed as an “overflow?”
 - If giving is an overflow, what is our responsibility?
 - We see several other fruits of the Spirit’s word described as an overflow in v. 7. What is the relationship of these characteristics with the grace of giving?

2. Read 2 Cor. 8:8-9, then discuss the following.

- Why do you think Paul talks about his request as not a “command,” but rather at test?
- How do you feel about the concept in v. 8, that the sincerity of your love for God and others will be seen in your giving? What does your current giving say about your love for God and others?
- V. 9 contains the central argument in Paul’s request, which he hopes will motivate his readers to generous giving.
 - In what way was Jesus rich prior to his incarnation?

- In what ways did Jesus become poor for us?
- In what ways has Jesus, through the gospel, made you rich? Do you feel that you are already experiencing this richness?
- In what way does the truth of this verse impact our relationship with money? (In Pastor Josh's words, "We give as a response to grace!")

3. Read 2 Cor. 8:10-15, then discuss the following.

- Paul urges his readers to make good on the verbal desire to give, which they have already expressed. Have you expressed a desire to give toward something, and not yet acted on that desire?
 - How can we encourage you or keep you accountable to carry out your intention?
- According to these verses, what does willingness have to do with the value of our giving?
- We see two mentions here of proportionate giving ("according to your means"). Would you say that your current giving is proportionate with your means? Why or why not?
- What does the concept of equality have to do with our giving?

FINAL APPLICATION

- What degree of responsibility do you feel for our church's financial well-being? Why?
- If you are not yet giving to our church's ministries on a regular basis, what do you think is a reasonable, "proportionate" way for you to begin?
- To what degree do you think God invites you to give to the operating needs of our church, as opposed to special needs, such as disaster relief or orphan care? How do you go about planning your giving?
- What changes do you feel God is calling you to make in this area?

PRAYER:

- Take time to share about and pray for any other needs that exist in your group.
- Pray about the action steps that this study requires.