

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Read the passage out loud as a group. Option: Give the group 5 minutes to look at the passage by themselves.

This Week's Passage

Scripture Reference

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

¹ And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵ And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶ So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

¹⁰ And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. ¹¹ Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. ¹² For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

¹³ Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴ At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, ¹⁵ as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little."

Discussion

Ask the Group: What about this passage stood out to you?

Leaders' Note: This question gives your group the opportunity to explore their own ideas before leading them to specific discussion. Caution: Do not let this turn into a debate about personal understandings—keep it more on the "observation" level.

Ask the Group: What do you think about, or what emotions do you have, when you hear someone talk within the church about giving?

Leader's Note: Have the group read the background information on 'the collection':

1 Corinthians 16:1-4, Romans 15:25-27. Please be careful that this doesn't become a "rant" for someone—either for or against giving (and what that should/should not look like, e.g. tithe).

Ask the Group: What do we learn about the Macedonians from this passage?

Possible Answers: Extremely generous, really wanted to serve through giving, viewed it as a privilege.

Ask the Group: Read verses 1-5 and notice the results of God's grace in the Macedonians' lives. How do you think we are able to obtain this same gift of grace from God? *Possible Answers: Simply ask Him for it; that's all we can do because it's a gift.*

Leader's Note: (For verse 6) Titus had both come to them previously and was there with the Corinthians - Commentators think it was when he delivered Paul's severe letter to them.

Ask the Group: Do you think it was fair for Paul to test the sincerity of the Corinthians' love by encouraging them to give? (v. 8)

- Why or why not?

Ask the Group: How is Jesus an example to the Corinthians? (v. 9)

Possible Answers: showed 'sincerity of love' by giving all He had.

Ask the Group: Why do you think the Corinthians lagged in finishing their giving after their initial enthusiasm? (vv. 10-11)

Possible Answers: Distractions, guilt, other issues arose in the church, etc.

- What are some reasons that we are prone to that same fault?

Possible Answers: Time passes and we forget, other interests come into play, laziness, we lose sight of the original reason and/or goal.

Ask the Group: What does it look like to give outside of your means? (v. 11)

Possible Answers: Giving outside of what God has provided for you.

- Why is this wrong and unwise to do?

Possible Answers: This is wrong and unwise because unless God has commanded, given, or promised the resources that you gave, you are assuming upon Him or essentially testing Him.

Leaders Note: Read Exodus 16:11-21 (and verse 31, 36 for details on mana) for background on 2 Cor 8:15. Be careful this doesn't become a tangent on socialism.

Ask the Group: Paul's concern for the Corinthians is to see the good work the grace of God started in them come to fruition. Why do you think this concern is Paul's motive to encourage them to give, versus a motive to relieve people who are hard pressed?

Possible Answers: Paul has learned from Jesus' sacrifice that the God's goal for believers is not financial equality but Christ-likeness - so the motive is to see them be more like Christ, which in turn will also help those in need.

Gospel Application

Ask the Group (small or large): In what ways do you enjoy being generous to others?
(Steve's 4 T's - time, treasure, talent, ticker)

- Are there any other people God has shown you recently who could benefit from your generosity this week?

Ask the Group (small or large): Are there commitments in your life that you've lost sight of and need to fulfill?

- How can you refocus and 'finish them'?

Ask the Group (small or large) Do you view giving as a privilege, why or why not?

- Or do you struggle to give with joy?

Suggestion: Send this application question and challenge out during the week to encourage your group.

Last Week's Application: (Discuss if time)

Ask the Group (small or large): Are there any relationships in your life where you need to speak the "truth in love," even though it may cause them sorrow?

Ask the Group (small or large): When convicted by sin this week, how can you respond like the Corinthians (as described in this passage)?