

FINANCIALLY FREE



Week of February 7, 2021¹

The Difference:

Financial advice works best when it is delivered at the right time to someone willing to listen. Efforts to teach junior high kids about mortgages are going to be about as worthwhile as teaching a young couple about how to spend in retirement. Even when the advice is right, the receiving party must have the right attitude to listen.

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 Paul gives the church of Corinth some financial advice. The time was right. Paul was coming to collect their offering to relieve poverty in the Jerusalem church. These gifts would serve as a goodwill gesture from Gentiles to Jews. But they needed help mustering the enthusiasm to complete the gift they had promised.

Paul pulls out all the stops to encourage them, but always stops short of commanding the gift. Paul praises the attitude of the much poorer Macedonian church. He shows how God has been generous and reminds them of their previous enthusiasm. He reminds them of how God's blessings flow to those who "sow generously." And he introduces the Corinthians to the team who will come to receive the gifts.

This week's lesson focuses some of the underlying principles and encouragement to help us excel in the grace of giving.

Conversation Starters:

- What is the best gift you have ever given?
- What was something you had to be convinced to do, but turned out extremely beneficial? Who convinced you to do it?

Bible Study Discussion:

- **Read 2 Corinthians 8:7-9**
 - God's way of measuring significance is different than the world's way. How might the Corinthians' weakening commitment to their financial promise indicate they had turned back toward a worldly way of measuring success?
 - Why is Paul hesitant to command the Corinthian church to give?
- **Read 2 Corinthians 8: 1-2, 12-15**
 - What principles does Paul share on how communities should give based on their financial situation? Should this apply to individuals as well as communities?
 - In verse 15, Paul quotes Exodus 16:18, which tells how the God provided the Israelites manna and how it was shared. How does this connect to verses 12-14? How does God's provision (back then) connect to their use of resources now?

¹ This week's lesson was written by Scott Kubie and edited by Dawn Gentry.

- **Read 2 Corinthians 9:1-2,7**
 - What emotion did Paul feel about their “eagerness to help” (NIV)?
 - Why is cheerful giving emphasized more than the actual amount?

- **Read 2 Corinthians 9:8-11**
 - What are some rewards or benefits to the giver?
 - Are those benefits financial, spiritual, and/or emotional?

- **Summarize and Respond**
 - Who do you most identify with in the passage? The Macedonians, the Corinthians, Paul, or the Jerusalem church? Why?
 - Would you describe yourself as a “cheerful giver”? Why or why not?
 - Look at the application questions below and pick the one that most matches your situation. Partner with a friend to hold each other accountable this week on your best next step.

This Week’s Next Steps (*Pick the one that best resembles your financial situation*)

- *For those who are struggling:* Read Acts 4:32-35. Let people know of your challenges. CCC is blessed to provide prayer, guidance and sometimes financial support based on the needs and situation of each person and family.
- *For those who are getting by, but money is tight:* Please consider 2 Corinthians 8:12 and 2 Corinthians 9:7. How can I give cheerfully based on what I have, not what I hope to have in the future?
- *For those doing okay:* Examine 1 Timothy 6:9-10. Am I focused more on climbing the next rung on the financial ladder or on enjoying the peace that comes with contentment?
- *For those doing well:* Meditate upon 1 Timothy 6:17-19. Where is my hope and where do real blessings come from?

Prayer Prompts

- *Father God, we know you provide all the blessings in our lives. Thank you for all that you provide. We pray for those who are struggling financially.*
- *Holy Spirit, shape our desires so we can be cheerful givers eagerly looking forward to the enrichment that comes with a closer relationship to you.*
- *Jesus, help us accept the grace you extend to us by becoming poor so that through your poverty, we might become rich.*