

# *GLIMPSSES OF THE GIFT OF GIVING*

## **LEADER'S MANUAL**

A Bible Study series  
for  
Faith Lutheran Church  
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# GLIMPSES OF THE GIFT OF GIVING

## Lesson A: 2 Corinthians 8:1 – 7; Luke 7:1 –10

### Worship

Read Psalm 103 (selected verses) responsively.

A: Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

**B: Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.**

A: who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

**B: who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,**

A: who satisfies your desires with good things

**B: so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.**

**Prayer:** Merciful God, the Giver of all good gifts, we thank you for giving us life on this earth and more importantly, life eternal. We acknowledge your awesome power and compassion. Help us to imitate your love in our Christian giving so that our lives can be ones of thankfulness for what you have done. Amen.

### Introduction

People relate to people. That is one reason why all of us can benefit from Biblical examples of people who were generous in their giving. Biblical examples are some of the best ways to apply Scriptural truths to our thank-filled lives. Giving is a gift of God, and we have the confidence that God gives that gift to all Christians when he gives them hearts of faith. It has less to do with the ability to give and more to do with giving from thankful hearts. In this lesson we are blessed to have a glimpse of the joyful reason for giving.



## **“Under the Poverty Level, Yet Off the Charts with the Joy of Giving”**

### **The Macedonian Example: 2 Corinthians 8: 1 – 7**

<sup>1</sup>And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. <sup>2</sup>Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. <sup>3</sup>For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, <sup>4</sup>they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. <sup>5</sup>And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. <sup>6</sup>So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. <sup>7</sup>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.

1. Identify Paul's description of the offering he was administering among the Corinthians (v. 6). What was the origin of this gift (v. 1)? Analyze the connection between these two phrases.

**The offering was an “act of grace”. It is interesting to note that Paul uses this grace word 7 times in these chapters in 2 Corinthians. Paul is truly describing what the gift of the Christian steward is – an imitation of God's abundant grace found in Jesus Christ. God's grace is free and centers around his gift of Jesus whom we know and love.**

***The origin of the gift is the “grace that God gave” to his churches. God's grace is freely given. That grace of God brings eternal salvation to all whom believe in Jesus as their Savior.***

***The connection is one of response. Illustration: billiard balls react; people respond. When the love of God is found in the human who comes to know Jesus and his redemptive work, the response is one of thanks. The grace of God inspires a new life of service that includes unselfish and generous giving. The offerings of the Christian are much more than just some “money”. They are part of one's worship, a way to give back to the Lord. Our gifts ought to be freely-given and grace motivated.***

2. The church in Macedonia was under tribulation, most likely the continued persecution by the Jews in Berea and Thessalonica (Acts 17:5, 13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14 ff) and by the Roman city officials in Philippi (Ph 1:28, 30). Overflowing joy and extreme poverty (v. 2) combined to make

the Macedonians extremely generous. Explain how this might happen for a Christian under such conditions. Share some examples.

***It is interesting that joy and poverty are connected in making the Macedonians generous. Even though they were poor, they were generous; even though they had hardships, they expressed joy. What a model for us! The word translated “generosity” comes from a word with the root meaning of “single”. The Macedonians had a singleness of purpose – to imitate the grace of God. They exhibited no ulterior or self-serving motives. Doesn’t giving, true Christian giving, begin with a grace attitude of the heart?***

***There are Christians who experience poverty, yet are generous in their giving. The point of our gift is not how much we give, but why we give. Solicit responses from the participants of examples from their lives in this regard.***

3. In this difficult time the Macedonian Christians were supporting their local congregation and sending money to Paul, their “adopted” missionary. Now they also wanted to help the needy Christians in Jerusalem who were struck by a famine. How are the designated offerings of your congregation similar to the Macedonian one? How are they different?

***It might be helpful to have the participants draw a Venn Diagram to list the similarities and differences between the two types of gifts.***

***Similar: given out of love; joint effort of all; go to “needy” places home and abroad; come from Christians; imitate grace of God; given as a response***

***Different: we are not as “poor” as the Macedonians; our giving can be tainted by selfishness, materialism, envy, guilt and lack of genuine love for those in need; the Macedonians also initiated giving and didn’t need to be prompted***

4. In verses 3 and 4 the Macedonians acted entirely on their own initiative. Paul had not directed them to gather the offering. He had merely mentioned to them that such an offering was being gathered and that the Corinthians were participating. The eager desire of the Macedonians to participate was there because of the attitude of their hearts. From verses 2 – 5 identify characteristics of those hearts. Assess how these characteristics came about and grew in their hearts.
  - a) ***overflowing with joy***
  - b) ***rich generosity***
  - c) ***gave to the Lord first***
  - d) ***saw it as a privilege***

***It goes back to the grace of giving. They simply imitated God’s gracious grace found in Jesus Christ. Giving is not amount money; it is about hearts that respond to the grace of God. Each of the above characteristics***

***began in the heart. Their viewpoint was not of the world, but of God's. In addition, Paul wanted them to be leaders in giving. They responded.***

5. The Macedonian Christians pleaded for the privilege of participating in Paul's fund appeal for the needy believers in Jerusalem. The Macedonians were the poorest of the poor and were facing great hardships, yet they had the faith and desire to give. They found joy in participating in Paul's appeal and gave generously. Give examples from your experiences with people who have the "Macedonian spirit". Share how knowing such people has been a blessing to you and given you joy?

**Modeling is an important factor in helping Christians learn how they might use their money. Is it right to hold up to Christians the example of other Christians? Paul does just that with the Macedonians. Have participants share examples of people in their lives who had the Macedonian spirit and how that example was a blessing for their life.**

6. What may have been some of Paul's purposes for citing the example of the Macedonians? How can that method be used in your congregational appeal?

**Paul certainly understood the struggles each Christian experiences living in a sinful world with a sin-filled nature. We face struggles and temptations every day that counter our attitude of graceful giving. The sins of envy, greed, materialism, and selfishness are evident. Good solid Christian models are reminders for generous giving. This example serves as a model for those who are tempted to plead poverty when asked to give.**

***This method of models will be very evident in your church appeal. Three models will be shared through these Bible studies. The consecrated Christian will examine each model, prayerfully consider each model, ascertain the needs of God's kingdom, count his/her blessings, and then make decisions reflecting a thankful response based on the love of Jesus.***

***It should be stressed that the manner in which our fellow Christians give is not the issue. The issue is that they give out of hearts of faith and as an expression of love.***

7. One person has defined Christian giving this way:  
Christian giving is a gracious gift of God that provides the <sup>1</sup>desire, <sup>2</sup>capability and <sup>3</sup>opportunity to give.

Give your thoughtful reaction to each part of this definition.

**The desire is based on the grace of giving. We give because he first gave. We respond to God's grace. We desire to give! Our present ability to give defines our capability. In America we are one of the most richly blessed nations ever to exist on the face of the earth. Do we have the capability? Hmm.... God is right now beginning to place a special opportunity before your people. Each day of our lives, we have opportunity to give back. The stewardship of time, talents and treasures are for each era of time.**

## “Taking the Lead in Joyful Giving”

### **The Centurion Example: Luke 7:1 – 10**

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup>The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, <sup>5</sup>because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." <sup>6</sup>So Jesus went with them. <sup>7</sup>He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup>For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." <sup>9</sup>When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." <sup>10</sup>Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

1. This person was a special disciple with many characteristics. What was he like?

***The Roman centurion was loving and caring for those under him (servant); he knew and believed in Jesus; a respected individual in the Jewish community; loved the Lord and demonstrated that love through his gift to the synagogue; he loved the nation; probably well respected; had great responsibility (oversaw 100 soldiers); model for other Gentiles to follow; humble (“I do not deserve ...”); faith in God even though he was a Gentile.***

Additional attention could also be given to the fact that for the most part Roman officials and leaders were hated by the Jewish people because of the tyrannical and authoritarian control they exercised over the people. It is striking that in the case of this centurion, the people stated that "he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." He had come to respect the faith of the Jews and embraced it, even to the point of using a considerable amount of his wealth in building for them a synagogue.

2. One outstanding characteristic of the centurion was his faith in Jesus. What evidence is there that this man had great faith?

***One of the most amazing characteristics is his great faith and confidence in that faith. He understood that just as he did not need to be present to have his orders carried out, so Jesus didn't need to be present to heal (“say the word ...”). The centurion's faith was especially amazing because he was a Gentile who had not been brought up to know a loving God.***

3. It is very likely the centurion was a recent convert. Certainly his heart was on “fire for the Lord” and he exhibited a “first love” for the Savior much like the Macedonians. Share examples of people you know who recently came to faith and exhibited a “first love” quality. Assess whether the gifts of our people in our church are a reflection of a “first love” or a “diminished love”?

**Seek examples of recent converts. Or there may be someone who became a Christian during their adult life. Ask them to share their excitement of knowing who Jesus is. Sadly, life-long Christians can become dull to the excitement of being a Christian and lack of joy that is found in being a member of the King’s Family! That is why it is so important to be surrounded by God’s Word and immersed in various Bible studies, worship opportunities, and participating in the Lord’s Supper. The Word continually helps us to focus on “whose we are”.**

4. The faith of the centurion was a miracle. Our faith is as well. How are faith and giving connected?

**True Christian giving is based on a faith in Jesus. All of our giving ought to be done with a love for the Savior. We believe and find joy in that belief, then we respond.**

5. Verse 5 gives a brief but special insight into the history of the centurion. He had the means to give a larger gift toward the Lord’s work that had a significant impact on a major project. In fact, his gift helped to build the community synagogue. How was his gift similar to that of the Macedonians? How was it different?

**He gave a gift out of love for what God had accomplished in his life. He was a convert who believed, and then responded. His love was evident. This love was the basis of his generous attitude. So he gave. The same pattern can be identified with the Macedonians.**

***His gift was different in the fact that his earthly means were greater than that of the Macedonians. Therefore he could give a larger portion for the work of the Lord. This model is an example of proportionate giving: if I am blessed with more, my portion ought to be greater.***

***Another way to state this Biblical principle is: “equal sacrifice, not equal gifts”. Through their giving, both the Macedonians and centurion probably demonstrated sacrificial giving; yet their gifts were unequal in amount. It would be a good idea to restate the above principle as a way to introduce to your members this idea. The entire stewardship appeal is based on it.***

6. Brainstorm some ways that we can reach out and help our fellow Christians understand that our desires, capability and opportunities to give are a gracious gift of God.

**Solicit responses from your participants. The funding appeal will be the most obvious means to accomplish this. Remember to tie in the cross of Jesus as the reason for a response to a loving God.**

### **For Further Thought:**

Many devout Christians know and implement first fruit giving. This biblical principle encourages God's people to set aside a proportionate amount of money from earned income for the Lord's work. This portion of income comes "off of the top" before the Christian designates funds for anything else. It is a good plan since it gives priority to God, the owner of all things. Most Christians are in the habit of setting aside an offering for the Lord on the first day of each week.

Another Biblical example regarding offerings is that of sacrificial giving. This principle encourages the Christian to give over and above the first fruit giving. This offering exceeds that of the weekly offering and is "over and above" what is designated for each Sunday's offering.

Sacrificial giving is a challenge. It requires the Christian to evaluate his/her response in a way that will require them to give something up, delay a purchase, postpone a goal, or alter their plans to acquire something they desire. It requires a shift in priorities from thinking of material acquisition to that of spiritual thanking.

Sacrificial giving is also an opportunity. It will open the heart of the Christian in ways that they never imagined. Blessings from the Lord, both spiritual and physical, will follow the Christian who practices sacrificial giving. The Lord has promised to bless those who return a portion of blessings received. He is faithful with his promises!

1. How did the Macedonians and the centurion give in a sacrificial way? **The Macedonians gave from their poverty. They were not very rich in the world's way of measuring. Yet, they gave, and gave richly. The amount does not matter; it is the attitude. The centurion no doubt sacrificed something for his generous giving to build the synagogue. How much? No information is shared. However, the building of a synagogue certainly entailed a substantial amount of money.**

2. It has been said that Christians in their stewardship ought to practice "equal sacrifice, but not equal gifts". During an appeal such as the one your church is embarking upon, how will that be the case?

**There are two basic reasons for giving a gift: the need of the giver to give; the Lord needs it. Both reasons are Biblical and ought to be based on the grace of giving. The amount of the gift does not matter. However, it is clear from Scripture that the Lord expects us to be faithful in our response to his love. "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded. And from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." Luke 12:48. That response will be**



**evident in the various amounts given to your appeal. There will be gifts ranging from \$1 all the way up to \$100,000 or even \$500,000. Please stress this fact!!!**

**3. What does it mean to give sacrificially? Answer this question by listing examples or describing situations that could be classified as sacrificial. It may be a good idea to ask for volunteers to describe what a sacrificial gift is. Your members ought to be able to identify statements describing a sacrificial gift. Write them on a board and ask participants to copy the same. They may use them as future references.**

**Regarding examples of sacrificial giving, it may be helpful to give some initial prompts. Ask members to recall a time when a gift was given that required them to do without, postpone or alter their current situation or plans**

**Some real life examples from past stewardship appeals are:**

- a) One pastor took out a personal loan for their congregations upcoming appeal. The loan equaled half of his salary to be repaid over 10 years.**
- b) One couple decided not to purchase that brand new automobile because their church was embarking upon an appeal. They delayed their purchase and put more miles on their present car so they could take their savings and give it to the Lord.**
- c) An employee decided to make an offer at her place of work. Her company was negotiating a new cleaning contract for its offices. She asked her boss if she could have the contract with the proceeds all going to her church's stewardship appeal. Her time involved would be 4 – 5 hours per week on Friday and Saturday. Her 3-year promise came to \$18,000, the new contract.**
- d) One woman decided to give stocks she had owned for a better part of 30 years to the church. These stocks were part of her retirement savings.**
- e) One mother and her children decided to give up the cable TV subscription for 3 years and give instead to the Lord.**
- f) One couple decided to forgo going out to eat once a week for the next 3 years. In addition, they gave a substantial amount of saved up cash.**
- g) Another couple decided to sell one of their investment homes and give the entire proceeds to the church.**
- h) A teen decided to support an appeal by writing a check worth 10% of her college savings.**

# GLIMPSES OF THE GIFT OF GIVING

## Lesson B: Acts 4: 32 – 37

### Worship

Read Psalm 103 (selected verses) responsively.

A: The Lord is compassionate and gracious,

**B: slow to anger, abounding in love.**

A: he does not treat us as our sins deserve,

**B: or repay us according to our iniquities.**

A: For as high as the heavens are above the earth,

**B: so great is his love for those who fear him;**

A: as far as the east is from the west,

**B: so far has he removed our transgressions from us.**

A: As a father has compassion on his children,

**B: so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.**

**Prayer:** Merciful God, you are a most gracious and caring God. We thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, as the Savior of the world. It is through his living a perfect life and being sacrificed in our place we are “perfect” in your sight. We thank you for sending Jesus to this world. We thank you for accepting us as your dear children. Help us to live our lives out of gratitude for what Jesus has done for us. We ask you also to bless our study today. Help us to gain special insights so that we can better give you praise and honor in all things. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

### Introduction

Yes, people relate to people. From the last lesson we can begin to see how the Lord has given us role models to follow for our daily walk with Jesus. These Biblical models can be an inspiration for us as we begin thinking of how to support our special appeal for our church. Giving is a gift of God, and we have the confidence that God gives that gift to all Christians when he gives them hearts of faith. It has less to do with the ability to give and more to do with giving from thankful hearts.

In this lesson we will study someone who gave special encouragement to God’s followers. May the Lord continue to open our eyes so our lives can be ones that give continuous thanks to him. May we, too, through our actions and words, be encouragers for others.



## “Wise and Prudent Investor Steps Forward”

### The Barnabas Example: Acts 4:32 – 37

<sup>32</sup>All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. <sup>33</sup>With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup>There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales <sup>35</sup>and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. <sup>36</sup>Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), <sup>37</sup> sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

1. In the Jerusalem church believers were “one in heart and mind” (verse 32). Name ways in which your congregation is similar to the early Jerusalem one. Are there ways in which you are different?

**Most congregations will agree that their doctrinal beliefs are in sync with one another – that is one reason why people are attracted to like congregations. Your congregation professes a belief in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world – he suffered, died and resurrected himself. Believers, when they focus on Jesus, exhibit a oneness in heart and mind.**

***It may be interesting to seek answers to the second question of being different. Ask participants for their insights. The most obvious difference is the fact that since we are so richly blessed in our country and have a free enterprise system, there is little need to share one’s possessions with others.***

2. The believers in our example had complete trust in the ability of the apostles to administer funds in an honorable, practical and loving way. Explain how we demonstrate that same trust today with leaders at the local and home church levels.

**Many congregations incorporate a unified budget – all offerings are disbursed according to an approved budget. Elected church officials, representing the congregation, are entrusted to the financial affairs of the congregation. The same can be said of the national church bodies.**

3. It is easy to see why Barnabas was nicknamed “Son of Encouragement.” Barnabas was moved by the Holy Spirit to give a sizeable gift. He gave substantially from his wealth, riches God had allowed him to accumulate over the years. What are some examples of accumulated wealth in our society?

**Real estate, rental properties, trusts, stocks, bonds, certificate of deposits, mutual funds, collectibles, annuities, pension plans (SEP, employer, 401 Ks, etc.), jewelry, crops, livestock, etc.**

4. Gifts like Barnabas's can have a dramatic effect upon and give encouragement toward appeal efforts. Special offerings can be an occasion for giving from accumulated assets. Name some types of accumulated assets that some Christians may be able to use on occasion as special gifts to the church? At times we hear about Christians who give such assets to an alma mater, a hospital or some other worthy cause. Although not wrong, why may some Christians position these needs before the needs of the church?

**Many of the above answers can be substituted for the answer to this question. Interestingly, the number one reason why someone does NOT give their accumulated assets or money to an organization is that no one asked them. Christians do have a duty to support the brothers and sisters of the faith:**

***Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Gal. 6:10***

***Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Proverbs 3:10***

***Impress upon your participants the Lord is calling them to assist their church at this time and place. It appears that the major appeal your church is embarking upon falls upon "their watch". Earlier in their church's history members were called upon to support and begin their church. Now is the time for your members to step up. It may be beneficial to name some of the early pioneers of your church and share their stories of the struggles, commitments and opportunities these saints provided.***

5. When our pastors and stewardship leaders speak to us about our support of God's work, whose money is being asked for? Assess the type of spiritually healthy attitude we should demonstrate when congregational leaders "come asking for money".

**Of course, it is God's money. Everything we own comes from God. He has blessed us with numerous gifts! Sometimes, members react negatively when asked to give money. A healthy attitude is to view the ask as an opportunity to broaden and support the kingdom of God. God is using you at this time to do just that! Reflect upon the early Christian church: they were one in heart and mind. Christians, who exhibit this type of perspective and attitude, readily view giving as a way to say thanks to Jesus for all that he has done. To be asked to give, is viewed as an opportunity to say a special thanks.**

**For Further Thought:**

1. Money only has the value that one gives it. For some, money represents power and security. For some, money promises happiness. Others see money as a problem capable of producing misery. For some, the value of money resides in what it can purchase. For others the accumulation of money is an end in itself. For still others, money represents the possibility of undertaking philanthropic activities. Prayerfully consider some of the values that you give to money.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

What opportunities has God placed into your life for using the money he has so lovingly given to you?

**Since this question requires some personal reflection, your participants may best answer it independently. It fits nicely with the Thinking and Planning sheet that follows.**

2. How did Barnabas give in a sacrificial way?

**Barnabas was a respected leader of the church. He was a Levite by birth, a member of the Jewish tribe that carried out temple duties. This man must have had a gift for encouraging others for the believers gave him the nickname, Son of Encouragement. This example is a good one for giving. The purpose of his sacrificial gift was to help others and therefore was founded in an attitude of grace. Apparently, his primary purpose was to benefit God’s people. Obviously, a field was of some substantial value that was easily turned into a sizeable amount of money.**

3. React to this statement: If we give God our money without giving God our hearts, we miss the mark.

**All giving ought to begin with an attitude of thanks. That attitude is begun in the heart and grows into a decision to take action. It really is a way to emulate the grace that God has bestowed upon us through his Son, Jesus.**

On the following pages, encouragement is given to consider how the Lord is challenging you in a very personal way. The “Thinking and Planning Sheet” is a tool for you to ascertain the Lord’s calling at this occasion and place. Please take the time to complete it, discuss it with family members if applicable, and pray over a God pleasing and thankful response. The Lord has promised to bless your response, whatever it may be. Happy and blessed planning! You have a great opportunity to serve the Lord in this way.

**The purpose of the following sheet is for members to make a connection between the sacrificial giving models we just studied and their thankful lives. This will be their first step in making a decision of a promise gift to your appeal. Some key terminology should be explained.**

**Promise Gift:** This will be the promise gift the Steering Committee is asking each individual to consider. The name is based on II Corinthians 9:5. Others have called it a pledge or commitment.

**3 Year Gift:** Your Steering Committee will be asking each individual to promise a 3 year gift to support your capital appeal.

**First Fruit Giving:** This giving is the normal Sunday offering envelopes utilized by your congregation.

**Sacrificial Giving:** This giving is the “over and above” offerings that the Steering Committee will be asking each member to pray and consider.

**Walk through the sheet with them commenting on the various sections. The middle section (sacrifice, reflection, amount) of the first page should be highlighted. This will serve as a good introduction. Stress the difference between first fruit giving and sacrificial giving on the second page. Encourage them to begin praying to God for him to open their eyes and hearts on how they may respond in a thankful manner.**

**Encourage members to begin thinking how they could complete this sheet. Tell them it is not unusual for this process to take several weeks to complete. This sheet is NOT designed to ask members for a gift – that will come later in the appeal. More information will be forthcoming explaining the entire gifting process and the opportunities they will have. The purpose of this Bible study is to give participants a Biblical background on sacrificial giving and to have them begin considering options for a thankful response.**

## THINKING AND PLANNING SHEET

As a member of your church, you have a wonderful opportunity during this Appeal to grow in the grace of giving. Your *personal* example and commitment will be a way to say thanks to Jesus for what he has done for you. It is important then, along with your family, to begin praying how God may direct and guide you about a specific financial promise for the Appeal. It is important to remember your gift is always based on the motivation of the Gospel – the good news of Jesus.

As you consider your Promise Gift, consider these things .....

- SACRIFICE ... What does “sacrifice” mean to me? Your three – year Promise Gift should be built on a personal definition of sacrifice.
- REFLECTION ... What am I willing to do or do without? How can I show love to Jesus by my good work? Seek to translate “sacrifice” into a plan of action.
- AMOUNT ... What kind of commitment will my sacrificial efforts generate during the next three years? Your example and standard will be one others follow!

### PERSONAL INVENTORY

Consider investing from as many areas as possible:

- Income ... How much can I budget from income to give?
- Time and Talents ... What can I do or invest during the next three years to generate additional income?
- Assets ... What item of value do I own that I can give to my church (real estate, stocks, bonds, CDs, personal possessions, etc.)?
- Income Producing Assets ... What income could I dedicate from rental properties, stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit, interest bearing accounts, etc.?
- Sacrifice ... What can I give up, do without, postpone, or alter in order to give to my church?

In order to help make your giving a reality, it may be beneficial to complete the Planning for a Sacrificial Gift worksheet on the next page. By taking this personal inventory and placing real numbers on the sheet, you will begin to formulate a plan for sacrificial giving.

# PLANNING WORKSHEET FOR A SACRIFICIAL GIFT

## FIRST FRUIT OFFERINGS

Current first fruit weekly or monthly giving amount:                   \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total yearly first fruit offerings to my church:                                 \$ \_\_\_\_\_



## A SACRIFICIAL GIFT

I. Increase in weekly offerings:

From my monthly household budget, I could increase my offerings

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month, for a total yearly increase of:             \$ \_\_\_\_\_

II. Asset Possibilities ...

III. Income Producing Assets ...

ASSET	VALUE
Real Estate	\$ _____
Stocks	\$ _____
Bonds	\$ _____
Savings	_____
Other Assets	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ _____

ASSET	INCOME
Rental Properties	\$ _____
Stocks	\$ _____
Bonds	\$ _____
CD's	\$ _____
Interest Bearing Accounts	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ _____

IV. Plan of Action .....

Knowing that a sacrificial gift will require me to do without, postpone or alter my current situation or plans, I place my complete trust in the Lord. Through fervent prayer and after thoughtful contemplation, my plan of action to give thanks to Jesus through a sacrificial gift is .....



# GIVING AND MOTIVATION

## Lesson C: 2 Corinthians 8:8 – 12

### Worship

Read Psalm 100 responsively.

**A:** Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

**B:** **Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.**

**A:** Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

**B:** **For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.**

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we are gathered together to worship you and study your Word. Receive the praise of our attentive ears and hearts. Fill us with thankfulness and joy as you teach us more about your grace. Help us to see how you can use us for the good of your kingdom. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

### Introduction

The first lesson presented Christian giving as a gift in itself, a gift that God works through his grace. He gives us both a glimpse of Christian giving and through his word the ability to practice Christian giving in our lives.

The same is true for the motivation to give. One definition of motivation is, “an influence on the will that causes it to act”. In Christian giving motivation comes as a gift through the use of the word and Sacraments. This lesson, through Scripture, teaches this truth in a rather striking fashion as the Apostle Paul encourages the Corinthians in their giving.

### Why Give? 2 Corinthians 8: 8 – 9

<sup>8</sup>I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. <sup>9</sup>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.

1. From these verses what words are used that indicate we should never dictate what someone should give?

**“I am not commanding you” are the words Paul gave to the**



Corinthians as they considered a gift. The offerings a Christian brings are fruits of faith, a loving response to what Jesus has done for them. Paul does not make motivation for Christian giving an item of business for the law to handle. The heart of a Christian responds to what God has done for him/her and the response begins in the heart of the believer out of thanks for Jesus.

2. In the preceding verses, Paul had held up the Macedonians as a model for the Corinthians to follow. Now Paul states that Christian giving carries with it the opportunity for a testing, specifically, a testing of the sincerity of one's love. What does Paul mean by this? Read what Mark 14: 1 – 9 has for additional insight and example.

**Sincerity should be understood in the sense of genuineness, not something counterfeit, nor a showy display. Paul was not trying to “get more money from the Corinthians”. He was not pointing to an amount of money. Paul was getting at the very basic reason Christians give, it has to do with attitude. Remember the Macedonians served as a model giver because they were earnest in their attitude, they displayed an eagerness to give, and finally, they were joyful givers. The Corinthians could now measure the genuineness of their own love.**

***In Mark 14, Mary's anointing of Jesus was put to the test. Jesus rebuked those who found fault with Mary's actions. However, her acts were ones of worship and exhibited a thank offering to her Lord. Noticed how Jesus commended her sincerity and genuineness? She gave out of a thankful heart which exhibited a fruit of the faith genuineness.***

3. Even though the Corinthians knew about the grace of Jesus, Paul still reminds them of what Jesus has done for them. Why did he remind them and how does this apply to your life?

Paul knew that the Corinthians already knew that Jesus was the reason. He understood that this is nothing new, but rather something they need to keep on hearing. We are like the Corinthians. The struggles and temptations of a materialistic world bombard us daily. We need to hear, just like the Corinthians, that Jesus is our all, and because of his grace, eternal heaven is ours. Responses always follow the Gospel!

4. How is Jesus a model for Christian giving?

**Jesus exhibited an earnestness, a determination to love, and was compelled to love for love's sake alone. Those three characteristics are great attributes for any Christian giving. Christians will strive to emulate Jesus and his act of love for us in their giving. The grace of Jesus showed itself in the most remarkable ways: he was rich with unbounded and limitless wealth, yet became poor for our sakes. By giving up his wealth, he won for us riches beyond measure.**

5. When God's love for us in Christ is conspicuously absent in our giving, then an appeal to pride or to a sense of duty becomes our motivation. Such faulty motivation can evidence itself in statements like:

"It is your Christian duty to give."  
"All contributions are tax deductible."  
"Giving makes one feel good."  
"Look at how much you spend on recreation; you ought to give at least an equal amount to the Lord."  
"The church budget can't be met if we don't increase our giving."  
"In the Old Testament God demanded 10%; surely we can't expect him to be satisfied with our giving anything less."

Choose several of these statements and turn them into proper, positive, Christ motivated reasons for giving.

When proper motivation has been supplied, understood and embraced, then statements like the ones above can be used. The old man wants to use statements like above. Each of us is born a legalist, motivated in all our actions by sin-blinded reasoning that makes self, not God and others, the reason for



***It is our Christian duty to give if duty is understood to be a loving response for Jesus.***

***It is good stewardship to make use of tax deductions if applicable.***

***Giving makes me feel good because Jesus makes me feel good!***

***I give to Jesus and that money will be used by my church to carry out ministry work in our community and beyond.***

***It is within my Christian freedom to increase the % of my offerings beyond 10% because Jesus loves me.***

***When a person knows God's love for us in Christ, there will be a response. The new man living in the Christian appreciates the opportunity to give and regards giving as a channel for the exercise of the Christian's thankful love. Have your participants read I John 4:11. God's love for me in Christ motivates my Christian giving. Jesus is our Savior, our Motivator, and our Example – all in that order. Saved by His grace, we are then motivated to follow his example, also in the area of giving.***

### **Willingness To Give: 2 Corinthians 8: 10 – 12**

<sup>10</sup>And here is my advice 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. <sup>11</sup>Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your

completion of it, according to your means. <sup>12</sup>For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

1. Paul adds a significant phrase to encourage the Corinthians to get on with their work. The Corinthian giving, and ours too, should be “according to your means”, literally “from what you have.” From this phrase ascertain one of the Lord’s principles of giving.

***“according to your means” is another way to describe proportionate giving, giving to the Lord in accordance with what he has given to us. The Corinthians should not be measuring their offerings by what the Macedonians or anyone else gave. God desires believers to give based on what they have been given provided it comes with a proper attitude.***

2. Why does the Christian giver never have to be ashamed about the size of a gift?

**Paul clearly states the gift is acceptable if the heart is right. We don’t have to be ashamed about the size. Paul says, “your eager willingness”; isn’t that an interesting phrase? He not only states they want to give, but they want to give eagerly. The emphasis of his message is not the amount of a gift, but rather what the inside of a person is thinking, the attitude of that thinking, and then to carry out that thinking (the action – “to do it”).**

**Some may wonder about the acceptability of a gift: will God accept my gift? Acceptability of any gift depends upon God-pleasing motivation, consisting of a God-given willingness which flows out of faith in Christ. Giving should come from the realization that what believers have is from God, and that God has prospered them.**

3. According to these verses, what is it that God must create in the believer to motivate proper Christian giving? Evaluate this answer individually and collectively in connection with the fund appeal being carried out in our congregation.

***Paul, through these verses is stressing three, important characteristics. All three characteristics beg for a response called action:***

**1) desire (v. 10):** he wants to promote the Christian love with which the Corinthians began the offering and does not want that love to wane and lessen. He wants to see that love in action, bringing the offering to completion.

**2) eagerness (v. 11):** he sees the urgency of bringing the offering to completion, even issuing a command (“Now finish the work”). This command has a law emphasis, but is not spoken as a demand upon them; rather, Paul presents it as a guide for the believers – no law motivation. He is encouraging the Christians to match their desire with action.

**3) willingness (v. 11,12): Paul has the confidence the willingness is present so they will act on the desire and eagerness. It is fully understood that they have this willingness, not because they produced it themselves, but as something which they received from the gospel news of God's great love for them in Christ. See Philippians 2:13.**

**Stress and comfort the learners that it is God who creates in believers the desire, eagerness and willingness to give according to one's capability.**

4. Attitude is very important for so many things. How do the following Scriptural examples depict a proper attitude for giving?



**Mark 12:41 – 44 The poor widow gave from what she had, and Jesus praised her small, but large, offering (Mark 12:41 –44). The larger offerings of the wealthy are pleasing if they are given from a willing heart.**

**John 12:1 – 8. The costly offering of love that Mary poured on the feet of Jesus demonstrated a willing heart. Interestingly, Mary's gift demonstrated: a sacrifice (it was costly); it was an action (she poured it on the feet and wiped his feet with her hair); it showed her humility (usually servants tended to the feet). For this attitude and action, Jesus commends Mary.**

5. Agree/disagree: The pastor should seek to know the offering amounts individual members contribute during the course of the year.
- a. Is there a good reason for the pastor not to know the offering amounts of individual members?

Many pastors feel that if they know who the good givers are, preferential treatment may be given to them and their perspective of people may change. It can be a safeguard against giving favorable treatment to the rich. Some members may feel that their giving is between "them and the Lord" and no one else should know – that thinking is false because others do know – the counters, treasurers, secretaries filing reports, etc. Over the course of 10 years, with many people changing church positions, the possibility can exist that there are many who do know giving amounts of members.

- b. Is there a good reason for the pastor to know the offering amounts of individual members? Is admonition ever in order? Read Malachi 3: 8 – 9.

If people are living in open sin or in weakness, as is the case with members when it comes to their offerings or lack of them, shouldn't the pastor of the entire flock know that? If someone is living in adultery, I don't think anyone would disagree that the pastor should know that. In this instance there is a need for admonition and possible church discipline. Thus, if a wealthy two income family is giving \$10 a month in "offerings to the Lord", the pastor should know that also. In both cases there is a need for admonition.

6. What attitudes demonstrate a willingness to give:

***The obvious ones are: desire, eagerness, willingness. Others: love for Jesus; helping others / ministries, etc.***

7. What attitudes become obstacles to a willingness to give:  
***Think of reasons for not serving God, but serving self.***  
***greed: materialism has been present in every generation and will continue to be a temptation***  
***fear of the future: what will it hold; have to plan; etc.***  
***lack of trust: what will the future hold? I must save for myself / family***  
***comparing oneself to others – “keep up with the Joneses”***



## Giving and Motivation

### Lesson D: 2 Corinthians 8:13 – 15

#### Worship Time

Make use of Lesson C's worship format as an opening. This lesson further develops reasons why someone will return a portion of gifts to the Lord. In Christian giving motivation comes as a gift through the use of the word and Sacraments.

#### Equality Giving: 2 Corinthians 8: 13 - 15

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

1. A key word in these passages is the promotion of "equality". What is the difference between "equal giving" and "equitable giving"? What is God's view of each?

**Equal giving means the gift given is the same amount from each giver. Equitable giving is giving that shares with others and displays a trust in the Lord to provide the givers future needs. The Corinthians were to share in the burden of the poverty the Jerusalem Christians were bearing, and the Jerusalem Christians were to share in the material blessings the Corinthian Christians had received from God. Paul was not advocating putting everything into one pot and drawing from that pool. Rather, the Corinthians were being encouraged to give from their plenty to their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem who would benefit from them. The Corinthians had plenty for their immediate needs and ought to recognize their plenty (literally, your surplus) "will supply what you need". This will be equality giving. It also is an example of percentage giving which is an exercise in equitable giving**

***Paul's point is that when Christians give from what God has given to them, they need never fear that they will be the poorer for doing so. God will always make things come out right.***

2. The quotation from verse 15 is taken from Exodus 16:18 and refers to the once-a-day gathering of manna in the wilderness. Obviously, the young and the vigorous could gather more manna than the aged and the feeble. However, in the spirit of love and equality those with more than enough would give to those who needed more. In that way everyone had enough. This "equality" principle holds true for our church. List examples in which Christian love moves Christians with plenty to help supply the needs of

fellow believers who lack. How is this demonstrated in our mission outreach and humanitarian efforts?

***This example from the OT implies the principle that God will always make things come out right. God's intention with the gathering of manna was that each one of the Israelites should have just enough to live on for the day, no matter how large or how small the family. As God showed love and fairness then, so he would do the same in the matter of the offering, inviting rich and poor alike to trust him to provide for them so that equality could be practiced as God wanted it practiced.***



***Seek responses from your church where this principle is practiced. Summarize this question by the theme, God's love for us in Christ motivates us to give according to our ability in order to meet the needs of others.***

3. Christians giving from their plenty to other brothers and sisters of the faith is a beautiful way to express fellowship and oneness in Christ. Analyze this statement with the words from Galatians 6:10.

**Notice some key words / phrase from this verse: opportunity; do; all people; family of believers. The believers in Jerusalem were the Corinthians' brothers and sisters of the faith. They were living and practicing the principle found in Galatians 6:10. This was another way to express the fellowship or oneness found in God's kingdom. You may ask members if your congregation should seek additional groups to support in addition to the ones already mentioned previously.**

4. Wise Christians fully understand Paul's emphasis in these verses. When Christians give from what God has given to them, they need never fear that they will be the poorer for doing so. God always provides more than adequately for his children. Read Psalm 37: 35 – 40. What does God through David tell us with these words? Also read 2 Corinthians 9: 6, 8,11. Relate experiences in your life that attest to these promises.

**Psalm 37 reminds us that our God's sustaining help of the righteous will not waver nor stop. His people will be blessed and taken care of. Believers have hope, there is no hope for the unbeliever.**

***Paul in Corinthians reminds the believer the Lord HAS taken care of them. He has blessed them. They are rich. Seek from participants personal testimonies on how that has occurred in their lives.***

5. "I give to the Lord because I will receive blessings in return." Under what circumstances might one agree and disagree with this statement? ***Some, after reading this section, may think, "If I give, then I will be blessed." And they are right! However, it is important to look at the reasons why one is giving. Giving in and of itself does not make for***







***Christian giving. If giving is done without proper motivation, if it is done for the sake of putting on a good appearance, if it is done out of a sense of legalistic duty, or if it is a giving not motivated by the love of Christ, it is not Christian giving, no matter what the percent or amount.***

***You may wish to ask HOW the Lord has blessed them. Some will respond with examples of materialistic blessings, but others will share how their spiritual life has been blessed too. The promise is still there: the Lord blesses those who give! Encourage participants to take hold of that promise and trust in God's providence.***

### **For Further Thought:**

A. In the very near future our church will be asking each member to consider making a commitment toward the funding appeal. Some may suggest that this commitment should be built upon the theme, "Not Equal Gifts but Equal Sacrifice". Stated another way, "What can I give up, do without, postpone, or alter in order to return a portion of my blessings received from the Lord?"

Take a personal inventory and consider formulating a plan of action from as many areas as possible.

-  **Income** ... "How much can I budget from income to give?"
-  **Time and Talent** ... "What can I do or invest during the next three years to generate additional income?"
-  **Assets** ... "What item of value do I own that I can give to my church (real estate, stocks, bond, personal possessions, etc.)?"
-  **Income producing assets** ... "What income could I dedicate from rental properties, stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit, interest bearing accounts, etc.?"

If you haven't done so, begin praying to God for a discerning heart on how you might return thanks to Him for all of the blessings, especially that of Jesus, He has given to you. The spiritual impact of our church appeal program will be in direct proportion to the prayer life of our members. How is God challenging you at this time? Pray for His guidance and leadership.

**These words are meant to challenge participants to put into practice this lessons objective. Some will have begun thinking on how to respond to the needs of the congregation in the appeal. Encourage members to pray earnestly asking God to lead them. Prayer can not be stressed enough! By asking God to give us direction**

**AND the opportunity to give, we are opening all kinds of doors for the Holy Spirit to work. What comfort!**

B. No one is born with God-pleasing motivation for giving. We come into this world dead in trespasses and sins. We are born as legalists, motivated in all our actions by sin-blinded reasoning that makes self, not God and others, the reason for giving. Motivation from legalism can result in large contributions, but with that type of motivation they would not be pleasing to God. The goal of our funding appeal is not only to raise money but also to raise hearts so that our members respond to the gospel news of God's grace toward us in Christ. In a brainstorming exercise formulate questions that might test the genuineness and determination which result in proper Christian motivation for giving.



***Solicit responses from participants. What they are really being asked to do is to summarize the last two lessons of this Bible study:***

***What is Christian giving?***

***Why should I give?***

By actively engaging them with this exercise, the hope is for them, as Christians stewards, to reflect upon the blessings and obligations of being a Christian giver.

***The Gospel, without doubt, is the primary motivating factor in everything that a redeemed child of God does. However, there are also other things in life that motivate us. What motivates a husband to take his wife out to eat on their wedding anniversary? He does it because he loves her and wants to do something nice for her. That love for his wife motivates him, but the primary source of that motivation or the primary basis for the motivation is the love and grace of God, which motivates him to be the best husband he can be for his spouse. The Gospel is the primary motivating factor in our lives and underlies all of the other things that may motivate us.***

An interesting fact is that neither the KJV or NIV uses the word “motivate” or “motivation”. Thus, either there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the original manuscripts which corresponds to the English word “motivate”, or the Bible does not specifically speak about motivation as we today use that word.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

C. A God-given willingness to give leads to the giving of gifts acceptable to God. Evaluate the following statements:

The apostle Paul seems to be saying that the willingness to give a gift in and of itself already makes a gift acceptable to God. “If the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable ...”. This applies no matter how small the gift; size is not the factor. If the willingness to provide a gift is there, the motivation to do that is no doubt also there.

*Paul uses the word acceptable (v. 12) which may be a cause for some confusion. The gifts we bring to God are always tinged by sin. They may center more on following a habit than on gratefulness to God. They may be mechanical in centering on a fixed percentage rather than love or appreciation. But even though they may not be pure and perfect, God accepts them and takes pleasure in them because these sinful attachments have been forgiven and covered by the blood of Christ. God, when he looks at us and our gifts, sees Jesus, the perfect giver.*

*It is obvious the underlying principle with the above words is that everything we have comes from God. He is the owner of all things, we are but stewards, his trusted managers.*

- a. Giving comes from the realization that what believers have in their possession is from God, and that God has prospered them.
- b. A gift pleasing to God has its basis in a God-given willingness that flows out of faith in Christ.
- c. A gift pleasing to God matches the willingness to give with the ability to give. God’s gracious acceptance of our gifts does not depend upon a comparison with what others have or have not given.



## ENCOURAGEMENT FOR GIVING

Lesson E: 2 Corinthians 9:1 – 15

### Worship

Read Psalm 111 (selected verses) responsively.

A: Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them.

**B: Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures**

**forever.**

A: He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and compassionate.

**B: He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.**

A: The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.

**B: They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness.**

**Prayer:** Dear gracious Father in heaven, we give you thanks for all of the gifts you have showered upon us. Your mercies are new every morning; they are never ending. Help us to better appreciate the love you have shown to us. Let that love be our motivator to do all things. Thank you for sending your Son, and it is in his name we pray, Amen.

## Introduction

Mutual encouragement from Christians is so very important for our lives and faith. Just reflect upon the joy and privilege of worshiping together with our fellow believers each Sunday. What a blessing! Christian giving need not totally be a private manner. It too can be an encourager for fellow believers of the Lord

Jesus. This lesson will challenge the believer to encourage others through giving.

**Encouragement: 2 Corinthians 9:1 – 5**

<sup>1</sup>There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. <sup>2</sup>For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. <sup>3</sup>But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. <sup>4</sup>For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we--not to say anything about you--would be ashamed of having been so confident. <sup>5</sup>So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

1. Who knows about the Corinthians' eagerness to contribute to the collection for the needy believers in Jerusalem?

**Paul boasted to the Macedonians about the Corinthian's readiness, an eager willingness, to participate in the offering.**

2. Describe the effect and degree that this eagerness had upon them.

See v. 2, "your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action". The Corinthians served as an example for others to follow. We will not want to overlook this example in our own

lives. Christians can "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).

3. Evaluate why Paul holds up the example of the Macedonians (vv. 3 – 5) at this time?

***Paul is a pragmatic person. The first two verses cite the Corinthians as being a positive influence; these verses cite the Macedonians. Often times people can say and plan one thing, but not follow through with those plans. Paul was giving the Christians in Corinth a gentle reminder to finish what they began. Sometimes Christians need this type of gentle push. The "brothers" (II Corinthians 8:16 – 24) were sent to help move things along with the offering that was already promised.***

4. From these verses we can see that there is value for Christians to be both an example and to learn from the example of others. In view of these words and those of Hebrews 10:24 – 25, recall a time a thankful-giving believer was an example for you.

**Are there some in your congregation who exhibit similar qualities of being an example? Ask for responses of people, past or present, who have been an inspiration, a model to follow. Have participants share their stories and examples.**



**During your congregation's appeal, several people have been asked to be leaders, or encouragers, for others. Share how this is being done.**

5. The Corinthians were being encouraged with a gentle reminder, not coerced, to follow through with their gift. No doubt they did not resent the upcoming visit, but welcomed it. In view of these words and Hebrews 10:25, how is this example a guide for you when Christian encouragement is given in the area of stewardship of your material goods?

**Christians will certainly accept and receive the encouragement of their fellow believers, especially from the stewardship perspective. If we are being approached, let's remember not to resent a visit or words of encouragement. Remember, the very first trait for a Christian giver is the attitude, a willingness or eagerness, to return a portion of the Lord's possessions.**

### **More Encouragement: 2 Corinthians 9:6 – 11**

<sup>6</sup>Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup>Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup>As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." <sup>10</sup>Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup>You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

1. Verse 6 has some profound implications for the thankful giver. Explain how a farmer understands the meaning of sowing and reaping sparingly versus sowing and reaping generously. How is this similar to the subject of giving.

**This illustration would have been easily understood by the Corinthians. The farmer who puts little seed into the ground, is stingy in the number of seeds planted, will have poorer results. In order to save a little money with the seed, in the end the farmer will be poorer, for sparse sowing results in a sparse, meager harvest. A farmer who sows generously (see v. 5 "generous gift") on the other hand will expect returns many times over. The word "generous" literally means "blessings." The way to be assured of the blessing of a generous, bountiful harvest is to be generous in one's sowing.**

***Paul applies this farming technique to that of giving. Just as the sower knows that the seed he has sown is not wasted but will result in a harvest, so those who give an offering for the Jerusalem Christians should be sure that their offering will not be without effect. It will be a blessing for Jerusalem AND will benefit those who sowed the seed of the offering.***

**Wow! The Corinthians can sow with confidence in anticipation of this blessing and so can we in our giving.**

2. Paul in verse 6 is not saying, “The more you give, the more you will get”. Rather, he is echoing a highly regarded principle of God that states bountiful blessings, which come in various forms, will always follow their giving. See also Proverbs 3:9, 10; 11:24; 22:9; Malachi 3:10. Can you think of examples, in your life or others, where God has fulfilled this principle?

**Before soliciting examples from your participants, read the verses from Proverbs that support the theme: those who give can be sure that their gift will not be without effect. Some may be tempted to view “giving as a way of getting”. That may be pressing the comparison between sowing and harvesting that Paul is stating here. Paul’s point is that God’s bountiful blessings, which come in various forms, will always follow their giving. The Lord keeps his promises!**

3. Verse 7 clearly teaches that Christians living in the New Testament are not bound by the Old Testament tithe, but are under grace. We are free to decide how much to give! But with freedom comes responsibility. List some responsibilities of the Christian giver. What are some guidelines that will help the cheerful giver “decide in his heart” how much to give?

**Paul makes it clear the Christian has the freedom to decide how much to give: “decide in his heart to give”. The guiding principle is: we are responsible for planning our giving. Some groups that will be the recipient of that planning are: local congregation; missions both home and world; family members; church organizations; community groups (we call them non-profits).**

**The guidelines on how much to give also make up another responsibility. As we determine how much to give, whose voice do we listen to inside us: our old sinful voice OR the new man voice which is motivated by the love of Christ?**

**OLD MAN**

reluctantly  
(out of grief; covetousness; selfish means)  
**under compulsion**  
(by force, against one’s will)

**NEW MAN**

cheerful giver  
(using every gift God  
**has given for the**  
**benefit of others)**

**God the Father set the example for a cheerful giver. He didn’t even spare his own Son. What an example and inspiration for us to follow! A question to ask the participants is: how can you be sure which voice you are listening to?**

4. God supplies all of our needs, including those for giving. How does God provide us with the means to give?

**See verse 10. Paul returns to the seed-sowing imagery. The farmer can depend upon God, not just to produce a harvest, but to give him the seeds**

**for sowing through which God produces the harvest. For the believer, God will provide the money and other material goods they need to be able to give. God has the original supply of “seed” which he loans us. He blesses our use of what he lends us, thereby “multiplying our seed”. And we always remain stewards and caretakers, accountable to him.**

**God will also “enlarge the harvest of your righteousness”. A person who has been declared righteous by faith in Jesus is now able to live a righteous, godly life. The harvest of being declared not guilty is the believer’s life of righteousness. One aspect of this new godly life is a godly attitude toward giving. God is assuring us believers that he will continue to strengthen us in our lives of sanctification so that we have an attitude that produces neither reluctant nor coerced, but rather cheerful giving.**

5. We can do nothing (nor need to) to cause God to be generous to us, but we can stand in the way of receiving his “generous gift” (i.e., we can sow sparingly). Enumerate some ways in which that might be done.

**The ways that will be listed by participants will usually fall under one of three categories that follow. One way to sow sparingly is to promote a self-serving attitude / action: Am I doing this for the benefit of myself or out of thanks for Jesus? Lack of trust is another way to sow sparingly. If we trust our possessions / money to get us through life ..... But if we trust in our God to supply us with all that we need, then blessings follow. Another way to sow sparingly is to ascertain the focus of our love. Do we love our possessions more than God? What priority does God, and becoming closer to him, have in our life?**

6. Agree or disagree: It is impossible to “give ourselves poor”.

**This may produce some interesting responses from the participants. From the previous discussions, Paul would clearly say God will supply all that you need to give. You cannot out give God. On the other hand, Christians may have given to others while neglecting more immediate concerns like their families. If Christians give without taking care of those whom they are responsible for, then improper planning has occurred. Christians are responsible for proper planning (see verse 7). It is interesting to note that God’s Old Testament command of a tithe appears to be an appropriate guideline to follow. The tithe is a percentage that can be challenging to meet, yet does not cause someone to go without earthly needs. God’s design is always right on and his promises never fail!**





### **Final Encouragement: 2 Corinthians 9:12 - 15**

<sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. <sup>14</sup>And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. <sup>15</sup>Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

1. The Corinthians were encouraged in their Christian giving. List the results that gave them this encouragement.

**There are 4 blessings that God was attaching to this offering. Firstly, the Corinthians would be able to alleviate a critical physical need through the offering.**

**Secondly, Christian giving has an effect not only upon the giver, but also upon the one who is the recipient of the gift. Verse 13 clearly states the Jews in Jerusalem, who were on the receiving end of the Corinthians' offerings, would also be moved to worship and glorify God in connection with the offering. In fact, this thanksgiving to God was already occurring even before the offering arrived (see verse 12, "this service"). The saints in Jerusalem were filled with an overwhelming desire to thank the Lord because of the giving by the Corinthians.**

***Thirdly, the offering was a form of worship and this would be an excellent time to stress that offerings given to the Lord are another way to worship Him. Verse 13 with the words "this service you perform", Paul is using a word the ancient Greeks used to describe some public service an individual performed for his country, usually without remuneration. In the Bible it has to do with service that a Christian performs for his Lord (see Luke 1:23). So, our offerings are similar to what the Old Testament priests did when they offered up sacrifices to the Lord. Offerings therefore are a way to worship our God and that is why many churches often designate a specific time during a worship service for this act of "service".***

***Finally, the offering would also strengthen the ties of Christian fellowship between the two groups, the Jews in Jerusalem and the Gentiles from the churches Paul had founded. Verse 14 stresses this point. The hearts of Jews, who wanted nothing to do with Gentiles, were going out to their Gentile brothers and sisters in the faith. The Jews were praying for the Gentiles! What produced this change? Note the phrase "surpassing grace" in v. 14. The Gospel knows no boundaries or nationalities. The***

***outpouring of love was a beautiful expression of Christian fellowship that bound them together in one body.***

2. Offerings designated for other believers are examples of Christian love in action. Explain how the same results in the above question can happen today with offerings designated for mission fields.

***The Holy Spirit has a history! What happened almost 2000 years ago in Corinth, and the results that followed from their offerings, occurs today in ours as well. The Holy Spirit causes our hearts to say thanks for what Jesus has done, we give an offering. The Holy Spirit causes hearts to say thanks in receiving a gift as well. All of this is based on God's grace, the "indescribable gift" in verse 15. Throughout the Corinthian example Paul has focused on God's grace found in Jesus Christ (see Cor 8:9). Through the grace of Jesus we enjoy the forgiveness of sins, a new life to live, and the promise of eternal life. That grace moves us to share grace-gifts, our offerings, in thankful response to God's grace.***

***List examples of how your church has and continues to support missions through the offerings of your members. It may be helpful to share some personal stories on how the beneficiary of an offering exhibited similar blessings found above.***

3. How can people's generosity be made known as an encouragement for others without seeming to be a glorification of the individual donor(s)? There may be four issues to share at this time. All four focus on how God has demonstrated his grace to us – as stewards we are simply responding. The focus then centers on God, not the giver. God powerfully encourages generosity toward our neighbor by assuring us that:

- a. that he will provide us with the means to be generous;***
- b. that he will use our gifts to alleviate the needs of others;***
- c. he will use our generosity as an impetus for many people to glorify God for what he has done through us; and***
- d. our Christian giving will serve as a tool for bonding together those united in the faith.***

***When the focus is on God, glorification of the giver ought to be diminished.***

### **For Further Thought**

A. The Macedonians had no intention of sharing information regarding their generosity. It is Paul who "boasts" about them. Jesus had some very harsh words for people who consciously and intentionally make a display of their giving (Matt. 6:1 – 4). Formulate several reasons why some have a need to "boast" of their giving. How can we overcome sinful boastful thoughts in our own thank-filled lives?

This may be an excellent time for the discussion leader to share of situations in which a member has demonstrated grace-giving. These examples can serve as encouragement for others. By this time, your church should have heard several testimonies from members, both written and verbal, that serve as encouragement for others. We can “boast” about these generous givers much like Paul did with the Corinthians.

***Jesus, in Matthew 6, addresses those attitudes of self service and building up ones self. Acts are neither good nor bad in themselves, but it is the motive behind the act that makes the difference in God’s sight. Acts of giving are good works to glorify our heavenly Father, they are not acts to glorify ourselves. Jesus stresses that those who want to be admired or commended by other people for their demonstrations of piety will receive no reward from the Father. They are concerned about the approval of others, but their Father. Good works, which are our offerings, are done without seeking any kind of reward.***

***Solicit responses from participants on how they have overcome these self-serving thoughts in their giving. Conclude and stress that a grace-gift has as its focus a joyful response to God for what he has done for the giver. This focus of grace ought to eliminate any self-serving attitudes.***

B. In most discussions of giving, we tend to think of money. We might better challenge ourselves to evaluate the available resources (time, talent, treasures) the Lord has entrusted to us. Once evaluated and assessed, this leads the Christian to ask, “With whom should I share them?” In the course of the coming week, set aside a few minutes each day to prayerfully reflect on these two questions:

1. What resources do I have to work with?
2. What needs might I be able to address in my own circle of contacts (family, congregation, Synod, neighbors, social contacts, co-workers, etc.)

Pray that God would lead you through his Spirit to act in service to Him. Some suggested readings for your participants are Psalm 103; Psalm 111 and Psalm 112; Romans 12:1; I Corinthians 12. It may also be a good idea to begin brainstorming ideas on the available resources many of us have. Ask for suggestions to help others continue their journey of joyful giving.



