

Generous Grace Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Do you find it easy to share your possessions (clothes, books, tools, etc.)? Explain.
2. What's your favorite time of the day?

Read the following passages: 2 Corinthians 8:1-9; 9:6-15.

In 2 Corinthians 8-9, the apostle Paul is writing to the church in Corinth in connection with a financial gift he is gathering in order to help the believers in the church in Jerusalem. To encourage the Corinthians, he first highlights the remarkable example of the churches in Macedonia. God's grace had enabled these churches to send a gift to their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem even though they themselves were facing very challenging circumstances. In fact, the Macedonian believers felt that the opportunity to be generous was a privilege, a sign of God's grace operating in their lives.

Although the collection Paul was gathering was intended to meet a very real need in Jerusalem, Paul had a much bigger goal in mind. He hoped to promote unity in the church, particularly between Jew and Gentile. The young church needed a miracle, and Paul was depending on God's grace manifested in an act of generosity to bring it about.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Why, according to this passage, was the Macedonians' generosity so remarkable?
2. One of the key words in this passage is "grace." Find the appearances of this word in 2 Corinthians 8:1-10. How is grace connected to generosity? What are some other manifestations of God's grace in our lives that we may be prone to overlook? (See, for example, Hebrews 12:4-11.)
3. Read again 2 Corinthians 9:10-15. What did Paul anticipate would be some of the outcomes of the Corinthians' generosity? Explain some of the ways that generosity can impact the giver, the recipient, and even those observing the act of generosity.
4. Often we're more interested in experiencing a miracle in our own lives than being generous in order to help somebody else experience a miracle. What can we do to get past this hindrance to generosity?
5. Describe a time when you were the beneficiary of somebody's generosity.
6. Having a strong sense of duty or responsibility can clearly be beneficial in many contexts. In particular, such a character trait can help us do what is right even when our feelings are influencing us in a different direction. But in this passage Paul emphasizes joyful and cheerful giving (2 Corinthians 8:2; 9:7). Are there any

mindsets or perspectives we can embrace that will help us to be cheerful givers?
Read 2 Corinthians 8:5. What does it mean that the Macedonians “gave themselves first of all to the Lord?”

7. Recent research as well as multiple examples in the Scriptures indicate that generous people are happier people. Why do you think is? Have you experienced this in your own life? Explain.
8. How would you assess your current level of generosity in the areas of time, attention, knowledge, and money? What are you giving to others? Explain.
9. If we want to be generous, but we're in a financial hole, what should we do?
10. Do you give regularly to your church?
11. What is one way you can cultivate generosity in your life this week?

Pray