



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2017-18 Leader Commentary

Unit 1: Everything Belongs to Him
Session 5: It's About Faith (see pp. 118-121)

The Question: Why should I give when I don't feel I have much?

The Point: Giving is part of living by faith.

Background Passage: 2 Corinthians 8

Focal Passage: 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "Why should I give when I don't feel I have much?" and to drive home this one truth: Giving is part of living by faith.

Focus on These Points

Faith Is Required in Every Circumstance
(2 Cor. 8:1-2)

The background can be divided into four sections. Second Corinthians 7:5-16 provides insight into Paul's interaction with the church at Corinth. In 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, Paul addressed the matter of the relief offering for needy Christians in Jerusalem. Paul continued to address the subject of the offering in the third section, 2 Corinthians 8:16-24. Paul returned to the offering itself in 2 Corinthians 9:1-15.

In 2 Corinthians 8:1, before making a direct plea for the Corinthians' participation in the relief offering, Paul cited the impressive actions of the churches of Macedonia. This Roman province included churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and possibly others. The Corinthian church was in the province of Achaia to the south of Macedonia. Notice that Paul called their participation "the grace of God" (v. 1).

God's grace not only includes salvation in Christ but also the opportunities Christians have to participate in giving. We take steps in Christian growth when we begin to view giving not as something being taken from us but rather as opportunities to act with godly grace.

The Macedonian churches did not give from a status of wealth but during a time of severe testing and deep poverty. In contrast to the Macedonian churches' limited resources, their giving resulted in an abundance of joy and wealth of their generosity. Paul's words remind us that times such as these can become tremendous spiritual opportunities because sacrificial giving requires unwavering faith in God. Despite severe challenges, church members today can

The content provided is a supplement to the YOU materials provided by LifeWay. Permission is not granted for the reproduction and distribution of these downloadable resources beyond their intended use in conjunction with YOU materials.

experience joy and abundance by continuing to be faithful stewards.

Faith Flows from a Heart of Generosity (2 Cor. 8:3-6)

The Macedonian churches were Spirit motivated and participated on their own in the relief effort. Paul didn't have to cajole the Corinthians. He hoped they would follow the Macedonian churches' lead. Their giving was both according to their ability and beyond their ability. Some givers look for limits. Their question is "What must I give?" Other givers look for opportunity. Their question is "What can I give to?" The Macedonian churches were in the latter category, and the blessing of grace was multiplied to them because of their attitude.

The phrase "ministry to the saints" referred to a relief offering Paul was promoting among churches such as those in Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Galatia. He was collecting the offering to assist needy Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

The Macedonians' participation in the offering proved to be more than Paul had hoped. They exceeded his expectations perhaps in both the attitude and the amount of their giving.

Before they gave money, the Macedonians gave themselves to God. They wanted to make all of their lives available to God to use for His purposes. This included their monetary resources but extended far beyond that. The phrase "then to us" (v. 5) describes the Macedonians' commitment to the offering itself. Giving money was not their only or even their primary sacrifice. They offered themselves.

Titus served the Lord with Paul for many years. Most Bible students conclude from verse 6 that Titus had led the Corinthian church in committing to participate in the relief offering. That commitment had been made a year prior to the writing of 2 Corinthians (see 8:10). Paul urged Titus to help the church complete this grace.

Faith Excels in the Grace of Giving (2 Cor. 8:7-9)

Three specific areas of excellence Paul mentioned were faith, speech, and knowledge. The Corinthians were capable of showing great faith. They were overly proud of their abilities in speech and knowledge—so much so that Paul had to correct them on these matters in 1 Corinthians. Nevertheless, Paul also affirmed their diligence, a word that refers to zeal. In addition, they had begun to demonstrate again their love for Paul. He hoped they would be just as zealous to complete their offering.

Christian generosity goes beyond just giving money. Although giving is one concrete expression of our faith and commitment, we also can be generous in our prayers for others and in ministering to others in long-distance relationships. Paul didn't command the Corinthians to participate in the relief offering. He shifted his approach from gently prodding through comparison to emphasizing that to show grace to other Christians was to follow the Lord Jesus'

The content provided is a supplement to the YOU materials provided by LifeWay. Permission is not granted for the reproduction and distribution of these downloadable resources beyond their intended use in conjunction with YOU materials.

example. Our lives are to be expressions of His life in us.

Generosity is a response to Christ's generous love for us. Jesus Christ is *the* model of generosity. "He became poor," recalls the language of Philippians 2:7, where Paul wrote that Jesus "emptied" Himself of the rights and privileges of Deity to experience human life fully. Paul sought the generous, voluntary gifts for the poor in Jerusalem to test the sincerity of the Christians in Corinth. If we serve or give out of a sense of obligation, then we have missed the true blessing of service.