



Brown Community Group

Discussion Guide

JESUS: To Love Him is to Give – 2 Corinthians 8-9

I. Starter Questions:

What is at the very heart of any giving? Why would you do it and what motivates any of your giving? What comes to your mind when you hear the word “giving” or “Giving in Abundance according to your means”?

Does God view or judge all giving the same? What does he look at and more importantly expect from Christians with respect to giving?

Do we as Christians have a Godly obligation to support, give and take care of our fellow Christians in the community and others? What are our examples and past historical Christian examples?

All of these and more will be addressed in our scripture study today!

II. Discussion of Scripture:

Context: The book of 2 Corinthians is full of many paradoxes that fly in the face of worldly reasoning:

- Comfort through suffering
- Renewal while wasting away
- Power in weakness
- Life from death
- Grief that leads to salvation

In chapters 8 and 9 of this book we find a message about giving that also runs counter to conventional thought.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

This is directly discussing the “poor”, which were the poor Christians of Palestine, particularly Jerusalem. The need at Jerusalem was constant and Paul considered it a clear duty of Christians everywhere to alleviate it. This also helped Paul remind the Gentile Christians of their debt to the Jewish Christians in Palestine.

The liberality of the Macedonian Christians was a product of grace. Paul refers to their severe test of affliction. From the beginning, the Macedonian believers had experienced severe persecution (Acts 16-17), including destruction of property and plundering of goods. What little these people had therefore had become pitifully small and their plight was desperate. Even in extreme poverty, they had an abundance of Joy!

Discussion Questions:

1. What was at the center of the Macedonians wealth of generosity?
2. How can you have “abundance of joy” in the bitter depths of affliction?
3. In what ways do we see the “grace of God” in this passage?
4. What are some ways that Paul describes the giving of the churches of Macedonia?
5. What aspects of this passage run contrary to worldly perspectives or reasoning?

2 Corinthians 8:6-11

6 Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. 7 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also. 8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. 10 And in this matter, I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. 11 So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.

The Corinthians seemed to excel in everything, Paul meant this with all sincerity. The grace of God was available to them in abundance, but Paul was calling them to a more responsive attitude on their part.

Where gratitude is wedded to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, it issues in readiness for like type gracious actions. While Paul did not issue an order for the Corinthians regarding collections for Christian needs, he points out the uselessness of good intentions which do not also have a full corresponding action to complete. ***A will that does not lead to action is the antithesis of the Spirit-led life!!***

Discussion Questions:

6. What is Paul exhorting the Corinthian church to do? To whom?
7. How does Paul justify his expectations to the Corinthians? What evidence or example does he use?
8. With respect to verse 9, what is the discussing “rich” and “poor” with Christ? How does this statement relate to the previous verses about money? Or does it?

2 Corinthians 8:12-15

12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. 13 For I do not mean that others should be eased, and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness 14 your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their

abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. 15 As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

Discussion Questions:

9. In verse 12, what is the meaning of “readiness”? How is the spiritual value of your gifts judged by God?
10. In reading verse 13 & 14, what word might come to mind in how all Christians in a community are viewed and treated?
11. In light of our lesson several weeks ago on the types of giving, how does this type of giving fit?
12. Paul’s quote in verse 15 can be found in Exodus 16:16-19 (Read Exodus). How does this scripture lend insight into what Paul is writing about?

2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, 2 for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

Discussion Questions:

13. What positive attributes of the Corinthians’ is Paul discussing?
14. Why would Paul need to write Vs 1-5 if they are so zealous for the Lord, especially after writing chapter 8?
15. How would Paul’s message in Vs 1-5 directly apply to us today?

2 Corinthians 9:6-9

6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

Discussion Questions:

16. What is the heart of the message that Paul provides in verses 6-8?
17. Paul’s quote in verse 9 can be found in Psalm 112. How does this psalm lend insight into what Paul is writing about? What drives him?

2 Corinthians 9:10-14

10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Discussion Questions:

- 18.** What are we promised in verse 10-11? What is our part? What is God's part?
- 19.** What critical aspect of our giving is discussed in Vs 12?
- 20.** In verse 13, what does this say about how the receiver of gifts usually interprets or processes spiritually?

III. Responding in Prayer:

Father, if we have any fear or hesitancy when it comes to our attitude about giving, please remove it and replace it with a faith in you. We ask that you remind us that you are the giver of all good gifts. Remind us as well of the example you provided in the life and death of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Please give us wisdom regarding our giving and help us to see and act according to your will when presented with the opportunities to help those in need. Help us to show our love for you by authentically loving our neighbor in service and supply. Thank you for all that you have given to us, not the least of which is an eternity spent with you. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.