



## 2 Corinthians 8

<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.

<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.

<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.

<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."

## Chapter 9

<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.

<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.

## LIFE Community Leader's Guide

### Sunday, November 19

**Big Idea:** During times of need, it's good to remember the law of the harvest—the more you sow, the more you reap.

**Key Verse:** <sup>6</sup>Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

**Opening Question:** What do you do with your autumn leaves? Rake them, blow them, burn them, pile them, bag them, or have someone else take them away?

#### **Study/Discussion Questions:**

- Why is it so hard to reveal how much money you have and what you do with it? Where does this reticence come from? Is there an appropriate level of privacy in this area of life?
- What methods does Paul use to encourage the Corinthians to give to the poverty-stricken Christians in Jerusalem? To what motives does he appeal? Do you think it was easy or difficult for Paul to raise this issue in his letter?
- In what ways are you challenged in personal stewardship by Paul's appeal?
- In what ways are the Macedonians excellent examples of generosity? Why is Jesus Christ the supreme example of sacrificial giving?
- Chapter 9 verse 6 says "whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously." Have you seen this principle at work in your own life?
- Some people teach that giving money to the work of the Lord results in your getting more money for yourself. What does Paul say about the personal benefits of giving? (9:6-11)
- In his message, Pastor Bryan outlined four characteristics of openhearted giving:
  - it should be **personal** ("Each man should give"),
  - it should be **thoughtful** ("what he has decided"),
  - it should be **passionate** ("in his heart to give"),
  - and it should be **cheerful** ("not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.")
- Which of these have you experienced? Which of these do you find difficult?
- It is especially difficult to be generous during times of personal need. What do these verses say to us about this situation?
- Have you ever experienced a time when someone was generous towards you? What did that generosity produce in your life?
- Paul encourages cheerful giving. The Greek word for 'cheerful' is the root of our English word 'hilarious'. It is the exact opposite of calculated giving under compulsion. According to these two chapters, how could you become a more cheerful giver?
- As you conclude the meeting, spend time praying for each other about this area of your lives.