

Small Group Guide GENEROSITY IN COMMUNITY

The Church at Brook Hills, Dr. David Platt

June 7, 2009

2 Corinthians 8—9

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use, and there may be instances when you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience, not complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool rather than a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Go to the Web site <http://generousgiving.org/excuses-barriers> and choose five excuses you feel are relevant for your small group, clicking on each and noting the Scriptures listed to refute that argument. As you share each with your class, encourage them to answer these questions:

- Why do you believe people use this excuse for not giving to the church?
- Why is this excuse not solid?
- What verses do you know that prove its falsehood?

Explain that today we will be discussing the sermon called "Generosity and the Christian" and exploring specific examples Paul gave to show a church in prosperity of their need for greater giving.

Option 2

Invite each small group participant to share their "Top Three" for each of the following categories in this order:

- Songs played on your iPod
- Restaurants you eat at (not prefer)
- Snacks you reach for in the pantry
- Shirts/outfits you wear most often
- Entries in your checkbook

Explain that in this message, David stated that your checkbook often indicates your spiritual condition, and that today you'll look at the issue of money and the Christian.

Review the Message . . .

Money and the Christian . . .
Our hearts follow our money.

1. We give out of an abundance of grace.

- We give willingly.
 - We give based on God's blessing.

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- We give (at least) according to our ability.
- We give generously.
 - Generous giving to God . . .
 - Results in greater giving from God.
 - God gives enough for us . . .
 - And He gives abundance for others.
- We give cheerfully.
 - We are not forced by God to give.
 - We are freed by God to give.

Discussion Questions

- In 2 Corinthians, Paul was encouraging the wealthy Corinthian church to give to the offering he was collecting for the struggling Jewish church. He used the example of the Macedonian church, which was poor but gave generously to their fellow believers. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-6, encouraging the rest of the group to note every time the word *grace* is used (vv. 1, 6, 7). Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.
- The Macedonian example shows us that we should give out of an abundance of grace. How does this idea go completely against the way most people view their money? (*Most people don't view what they have as God's grace but as their own hard-earned cash. Instead of earning money for ourselves, we should use what God gives us not only for ourselves but also for those in need.*)
- Review 2 Corinthians 8:2. How is this equation—joy from trials, and generosity from poverty—contrary to what you would expect? What motivated the Macedonians to live like this?
- God doesn't force us to give; He frees us to give. Why do you think people sometimes feel the opposite? What is the root problem of that thinking? (*An incorrect view of God—not as the gracious giver of everything and the owner of our entire lives.*)

Application . . .

- Discuss the differences between these two views of giving: (1) What can we spare? (2) What will it take to help these people?
- Dr. Platt shared how John Wesley defined his “enough”—what amount of money he needed to live—and gave everything above that amount away. How does that example fit with the ideas presented in the first point?
- If we don't define our “enough”, we'll allow our culture to define it. How have you experienced this truth? What practical steps can you take to define your “enough”?

2. We give as a demonstration of the gospel.

- We sacrifice our rights for others.
- We spend our resources on others.

Discussion Questions

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- How do the Macedonians' actions reveal what they believed about God? (*Their giving revealed their belief and commitment to the gospel.*)
- Read 2 Corinthians 9:13. How is this verse a good motivator toward giving? (*It shows the connection between confessing Christ and the way we give.*)
- Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. Ask the group to fill in the blank for this statement: *The tithe is not our standard for giving; _____ is. (Christ)* How does Christ's sacrifice motivate our giving? How does His sacrifice determine how we give?

Application . . .

- Why are we so resistant to limiting our consumption of "stuff"? (*Be sure to discuss the first sub-point here: We sacrifice our rights for others.*)
- Often, we live like unbelievers in the ways we spend our money, making our church attendance the main difference between our lives and theirs. Why does this realization make it important for us to limit how we spend our money?

3. We give to promote thanksgiving to God.

- Giving unites the people of God.
 - We give regularly to the church.
 - The church deals responsibly with our gifts.
- Giving exalts the goodness of God.

Discussion Questions

- In 2 Corinthians 8—9, how did giving unite God's people? (*The Macedonians' gifts blessed the struggling Jews and encouraged the Corinthian church to give more.*)
- In what ways does giving unite churches today?

Application . . .

- Dr. Platt closed the service by showing a video that asked the question, "What if grace giving were a reality here?" What thoughts come to your mind as you ponder that question in relation to the church? What about in relation to your personal finances?
- Note the progression: God pours out His grace on us. We give. He gets the glory. How does this progression affect the focus of giving? (*It keeps it where it should be: on God, and not on us.*)