



LOVE GOD. LIVE SIMPLY. GIVE GENEROUSLY.

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



HIGHLIGHT: What does the Scripture say?

Primary Passages from Sunday

2 Corinthians 8:1-7: And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.





EXPLAIN: What did it mean back then?

To Be Reviewed before the group gathering

The book of 2 Corinthians is actually a letter the Apostle Paul wrote to a group of believers in Corinth, the capital city of the Greek province Achaia. Corinth had what was called the Temple of Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love, and it had 1,000 cult prostitutes at the Temple. Without going into much detail, Corinth was not exactly the most moral city. It is commonly referred as the Greek Las Vegas. But Corinth wasn't just a sexualized city, it also had a booming economy. It was famous for shipbuilding, textiles, terracotta ceramics, tent making, etc. It was a very wealthy city.

When the Apostle Paul wrote letters to the church at Corinth, he actually wrote four letters to the church and not just the two we have in our bibles today. First Corinthians (written in 55AD from Ephesus) was actually letter #2. Paul's purpose in writing it was basically to tell the church at Corinth to behave: to quit succumbing to the sexual misconduct that the non-believers in Corinth were participating in. He told them to flee from sexual immorality, worship God, and then he explained the Gospel clearly so they could understand it and share. Second Corinthians (written in 56AD from Macedonia), which is one of Paul's most personal letters, was actually letter #4. In this letter Paul's main purpose was to praise the church's progress but also challenge them to correct a few areas of weakness, mainly: generosity.

Paul challenges the Corinthian church to be generous in a very unique way; instead of using a traditional Pauline tactic of strong commands and lists, Paul tells a story (true story) of the generosity of the Macedonian church. What's important to know about the Macedonian church is that their socioeconomic context was the polar opposites of the church at Corinth. Macedonia was war torn, ravaged by soldiers, and completely ransacked. The believers in Macedonia were not only dirt poor with no money; they were also facing major persecution. Yet even with all that going on, Paul shares the Macedonians gave with overflowing joy out of their severe trial and poverty. But Paul doesn't stop there, he shares that the Macedonians didn't just give according to their ability – they gave beyond their ability. They put their own needs: food, shelter, security, etc. on hold while they gave all they had (and even more) for others. It was through this example Paul challenges the Corinthians to be generous. He states in verse 7 (paraphrased), "Look guys, you're doing great in these areas: faith, knowledge, perseverance, etc. You really are growing in your walk with Jesus. Seriously. But, you're missing one major part – generosity. Take all the effort you've made in these other areas and apply it generosity, and then you will truly experience the grace of God."



APPLY: What does it mean for us?

For Group Discussion

- 1.) Share a story of the impact that someone else's generosity had on your life.

- 2.) Read Matthew 6:19-21 and Mark 4:18-19. These are just two examples, but Jesus spent about 25% of his time teaching about money. Why do you think he spent so much time on this topic and why should we?

- 3.) In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul tells the Corinthians a story about the Macedonians. What do we know about the economic status of Corinth and Macedonia? Why do you believe Paul used the Macedonians as his example of generosity?

- 4.) Read 2 Corinthians 8:2-4. Which description of the Macedonians generosity stands out to you the most? Why does Paul highlight these descriptions opposed to giving a specific money amount (e.g. 10%)?

- 5.) Read 2 Corinthians 8:5 and Matthew 6:25-27, 33-34. The Macedonians gave sacrificially and joyfully. Why do you believe that they were able to do this?

- 6.) Paul uses the Macedonians as the example of generosity because they did three things that our lives should reflect: Love God. Live Simply. Give Generously. Which of these is the most challenging for you and why?

PRACTICING GENEROSITY TOGETHER -- GENEROSITY JAR

To summarize this Generous series, we would simply say: Love God, Live Simply, and Give Generously. As a group, we wanted to put this into action together!

For the next four weeks, our Community Group will do two things. It will pray about something that our group would like to give to in the next month. Where is there a need? And how could we meet that need? This may be to the church (Care Ministry, end of the year giving), it may be towards The Chapel's end of the year outreach (Out of the Box), or it may be to do something for one of our neighbors. Whatever it is, the group will decide together what need they want to give generously towards.

Second, we will ask each person in the group to identify one thing that they spend money on each week that they would be willing to sacrifice and take that money and give towards the group's cause. Essentially, where is one place that you can choose life-change over lifestyle? What is that for you? No Starbucks coffee on one day a week? Not eating out once a week? Not buying that next "lifestyle" purchase?

Each week, we will have a tub Community Group. You can bring that money and place it in there and at the end of the series, our group will take whatever money we have gathered and we will give it towards the cause that we choose. The end goal is not to gather a certain percentage of your income or to have 100% involvement, but it is simply to experience the joy of giving generously.



RESPOND: What does it mean for me today?

Bringing the discussion to a point of action and accountability

Based off of the Macedonians example, we can take away three things: Love God. Live Simply. Give Generously. As a group, we want to practice this together!

As a group, discuss the following:

- **What is one need that we see that we could look to meet as a group?**
- **What is one "lifestyle expense" that you could sacrifice over the next four weeks and replace with giving towards our groups cause?**

The group may not come up with what our cause will be until a few weeks later, but we do want to encourage each person to begin this week with giving towards this cause!

