

SPREAD OUT THINK BIG

Week Three | March 4, 2018 | The Joy of Grace Giving

PREPARATION

GETTING READY:

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

God's plan is for the work of the ministry to be bountifully supplied by His people who give their tithes and grace offerings.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

Grace Giving is the supernatural demonstration of generosity that flows out of the heart of the dedicated believer and follower of Christ.

MEDITATE

"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 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." (2 Corinthians 8:1-2)

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Q: When you read the title of this week's lesson, what was your first reaction?

Q: *After reading the text for this lesson, what first came to mind?*

On Friday, November 3, 2017, the CBS Evening News told the story of a soldier who was killed in the war on terror in 2003 and how his then-15-year-old son was surprised for his birthday with his father's 1999 convertible, found by his mother, and then bought and restored by a patriotic nonprofit that heard of his wish to drive his dad's car.

"I can't even imagine being a 15-year-old kid whose dad died, when he was nine months old and being able to say, "Someone gave me his car that looks as good as the day that he left it," said Jessica Johns, the boy's mother.

When Jonathan Rozier was killed by a rocket-propelled grenade at a traffic control point in Bagdad, he left behind wife Jessica and their infant son, Justin. Shortly after his death, Jessica had to sell the black 1999 Toyota Celica that John had purchased.

Earlier in 2017, Justin expressed interest in finding his father's car to drive as his first car. Jessica started looking right away. Using the car's vehicle identification number and social media, she located the car in Utah within a week! After hearing the car's history, the owner agreed to sell it to her.

But Kyle Fox, founder of a group called Follow the Flag, heard the story and started a drive to raise the money. Follow the Flag bought the car, and Kyle solicited eight local businesses to help refurbish it. Then Kyle, a friend, and their sons drove the car from Utah to Texas. The whole endeavor was a surprise to Justin. On October 21, 2017, they drove the car up to the Johns' family home near Devine, southwest of San Antonio. Justin was so surprised, he could not speak.

This kind of story warms our hearts. What Kyle Fox and his group did, brought great joy to Jessica and Justin because of what they received. But it brought even greater joy to those who gave; who gave their time, effort, energy, and resources to make it possible.

When churches bless others, through giving to meet their spiritual, relational, and practical needs, those who receive, experience joy through the generosity of those who give. But those who give experience an even greater joy.

Q: *What is it that stirs the hearts of people to want to bless the lives of others?*

Q: *Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" [Acts 20:35d]. What do you think He had in mind when He declared those words?*

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

In the text, Paul's challenge to the Corinthians, related to a specific offering he wanted them to complete. The reference for this offering is given in 1 Corinthians 16:1. The offering was to be received on behalf of the Christians at the church in Jerusalem who were terribly impoverished.

Paul highlighted the giving of the Macedonians who gave to the same offering with great joy, even in the midst of their own poverty. The offering that was to be received was in addition to the regular giving of the church at Corinth, as well as the churches in Macedonia.

Churches in today's world support the ministry to which God has called them through regular ongoing giving. But there are times in the life of the local church in which giving over and above regular giving becomes necessary to the furtherance of the ministry. Giving over and above regular giving is referred to as "grace giving."

Oakwood was given an opportunity to purchase an additional twelve acres of land next to the church campus that would accommodate future numerical growth. Oakwood took a step of faith and made the decision to purchase the land. Having purchased the land, Oakwood must pay for the land over the next two years. This will give the congregation the opportunity to participate in the joy of "grace giving." There are four important things to learn about grace giving in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15:

1. **THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE ABUNDANCE OF JOY**
2. **THE ELEMENTS OF GRACE GIVING**
3. **PERSONAL DEDICATION**
4. **A MODEL OF SACRIFICE**

GOING DEEPER

+This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.

THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE ABUNDANCE OF JOY

■ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-2

In 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, Paul specifically deals with instructions to the Corinthians about a particular collection for the saints in Jerusalem. He gave an example of the kind of giving he had in mind as he described the giving of the Macedonians who gave according to the grace of God and out of the abundance of a joyful and generous heart. During his third missionary journey, Paul had collected money for the impoverished believers in Jerusalem. The churches in Macedonia: Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea had given money even though they were poor, and they had sacrificially given more than Paul expected. Although they were poor themselves, they wanted to help. Their giving didn't reflect their circumstances, it reflected their heart for wanting to help, despite their circumstances.

The generosity of the churches of Macedonia was motivated by God's grace. Paul did not merely commend those churches for a noble human work, but instead gave the credit to God for what He did through them.

The amount we give is not as important as the attitude behind the amount given. God does not want us to give grudgingly. Instead, He wants us to give as those churches did, out of a dedication to Christ, love for fellow-believers, the joy of helping those in need, and according to the grace of God that He places upon our hearts.

🗨️: *How well does your giving measure up to the standards set by the Macedonian churches?*

THE ELEMENTS OF GRACE GIVING

■ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:3-4

PAUL HIGHLIGHTED FOUR ELEMENTS OF THE MACEDONIANS' GIVING:

- 1. ACCORDING TO THEIR ABILITY:** Grace giving is proportionate. God expects His people to give based upon what they have.

2. BEYOND THEIR ABILITY: Grace giving is sacrificial. God expects His people to give according to what they have; yet it must represent a measure of sacrifice.

3. VOLUNTARILY: Grace giving is not the result of compulsion, manipulation, or intimidation.

4. ACCORDING TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

The Macedonian Christians implored Paul for the special grace of being able to have fellowship and be partners in supporting the poor saints in Jerusalem. They viewed giving as a privilege, not an obligation. They gave according to what God placed upon their hearts to give.

Q: *Have you considered what God would want you to give toward an offering that would pay for the twelve acres Oakwood purchased in 2017?*

Q: *Will you and your family pray and seek God's will for an amount over and above your regular giving toward this offering?*

PERSONAL DEDICATION

■ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:5-8

The joy of grace giving is a by-product of a life that is dedicated to the Lord and to others. The response of the Macedonian churches was far more than Paul had expected. That the Macedonians “first gave themselves to the Lord” refers not to time, but to priority. The first priority for the Macedonians was to present themselves as sacrifices to God. Grace giving follows personal dedication.

Titus initially encouraged the Corinthians to begin this grace giving at least one year earlier. When he returned to Corinth, Paul encouraged him to help the believers finish the collection of the money for the support of the poor saints in Jerusalem. The giving of the Corinthians was to be in harmony with the other “Christian virtues” that Paul already recognized in them: faith, which is the sanctifying trust in the Lord; speech, which is sound doctrine; knowledge, the application of doctrine; diligence, eagerness and spiritual passion; and love, inspired by their leaders. This was not a command from Paul but a plea for sincerity of the heart.

Q: *Does your giving reflect an on-going maturity in your relationship with the Lord?*

Q: *Will you give yourself to the Lord completely, to what He wants you to give?*

A MODEL OF SACRIFICE

■ 2 CORINTHIANS 8: 9-15

There is no evidence that Jesus was any poorer than most first-century Palestinians; rather, Jesus became poor by, “not counting equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6-8). In response to the Father’s will, He became poor when He became human because He set aside so much. Yet by doing so, He made us rich because we received salvation through His sacrifice for our sin.

The Christians in the Corinthian church had money, and apparently, they had planned to collect money for the Jerusalem church a year previously. Paul challenged them to act on their plans.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF GRACE GIVING EMERGE HERE:

1. **GRACE GIVING** is a willingness to give enthusiastically.
2. **GRACE GIVING** is striving to fulfill a financial commitment.
3. **GRACE GIVING** is giving to a specific need with the expectation of receiving when we have a specific need.
4. **GRACE GIVING** models the sacrificial giving of Jesus who gave everything He was and everything He had, in order to grant us salvation through His perfect sacrifice for our sin on the cross.

Q: *What does a true and meaningful sacrifice look like to you?*

Q: *What life adjustments must you be willing to make in order to give sacrificially?*

NEXT STEPS

+Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.

- 🔗 *Why is giving to the Lord's work through the local church an essential part of the Christian life?*

- 🔗 *Has God's grace in your life resulted in generous, spontaneous, and cheerful giving?*

- 🔗 *In what ways does giving produce beneficial results in every direction?*

PRAY

+Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.

- God, help me have a tender heart to give.

- God, give me discernment to know when, how, and to what extent to give.

- God, grant me a desire to be obedient and faithful to give according to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

