

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, Jan. 16, 2011

Passage: 2 Cor. 8:1-5 & 9:6-15

Memory Passage: 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read 2 Cor. 8:1-5.** The context of 2 Cor. 8 & 9 is Paul's prodding of the Corinthian church to complete the offering they had already begun for the church in Jerusalem (see Rom. 15:25-32; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; Gal. 2:9-10). The collection was taken through the local churches, and these are timeless, Scriptural principles that should be applied to our stewardship of all the resources God has provided us.

(b) How does Paul refer to the gift given by the Macedonian churches? Why do you think he chooses this term? What does it tell us about our approach to giving (cf. 8:6-7, 9, 19; 9:8, 14-15)?

(c) When you give through the church toward kingdom work, what words describe your approach? (Joy? Duty? Struggle? Reluctance? Excitement? Exuberance? Sorrow? Anger? Fear? Thankfulness? Sacrifice?) What circumstances/truths influence this description? How can considering the gift as "grace" help you to have a proper heart toward the joy of giving?

(d) *Family:* Using BCC's 2011 budget (hopefully you still have the copy the Management Team & Elders asked you to review in December!), show your family in detail the different ways we intend to use the finances God gives to our church in the coming year. Show them all of the missionary work being supported by the giving of the saints at BCC. Show them the total amount we are asking God to provide for ministry in 2011. Then ask: "From where do you think all of these funds come?" **Read 2 Cor. 8:1-5**, and as you lead this discussion, make sure you make clear that God's plan is for His people to support His kingdom work through His church. Also, teach your children how your family supports the ministry of BCC.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14-16 & Acts 17:1-15.** The churches in Macedonia include those in Philippi, Thessalonica & Berea. 2 Cor. 8:2 says that they gave "in a severe test of affliction." About what kind of affliction is Paul talking?

(b) How can being "in a severe test of affliction" affect our attitude toward giving? Why might the Macedonians have been tempted not to give in light of their affliction? Why do you think it is important that they still gave?

(c) What kinds of "severe test of affliction" are you under? Christians in general (think globally as well)? What comfort or encouragement can you (or any believer) take from Paul's commendation of the severely afflicted Macedonian givers?

(d) *Family:* **Read 2 Cor. 8:1-9.** Have your family search for every use of the word "grace" in these verses (write the phrases on your white board as they find them). Then lead them in a discussion about what "grace" refers to in each passage, making sure you emphasize that Christ's gracious work on the cross is the foundation for all works of grace. Use this time to preach the gospel to your family as you tie the gospel to the worshipful act of giving.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read 2 Cor. 8:1-5.** Paul tells us that the Macedonians', "abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part." What a remarkable combination! Living in a severe test of affliction and extreme poverty still produced an abundance of joy! What is the key to the Macedonian's joy? What is there in your life that robs you of such overflowing joy? How can you overcome your condition to abound with joy at all times?

(b) The Macedonians also "overflowed with a wealth of generosity." Notice the connections: Affliction abounds in joy & poverty overflows with generosity. How are these attitudes different from our society's response to circumstances? The church's (at large, not just our church) attitudes? Your own attitudes?

(c) The Macedonians gave not only "according to their means" but "beyond their means." Can you describe your giving habits as "beyond your means?" What holds you back from giving like this?

(d) *Family:* **Read Acts 17:1-15 (or summarize it in dramatic fashion: this sounds like a movie script!).** Ask you family how they think Paul and the Thessalonians felt as these things happened. Ask them how they would feel if they happened to them. After they bring their responses (fear, anger, confusion, sadness, etc.), Read 2 Cor. 8:1-5 and draw everyone's attention to how the Macedonians (of whom the Thessalonians were a part) gave. Explain reasons why the Thessalonians might have been tempted to not give, and how the grace of God allowed them to be joyful in affliction and generous in poverty. Then apply all of these truths to your family.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT**READ THE PASSAGE**

(a) **Read 2 Cor. 8:1-5. & 2 Cor. 9:7.** What is Paul saying about the Macedonian's giving when he says they gave "of their own accord?" How else could they have given? How would it be possible for you to give in a way that was *not* "of your own accord?"

(b) Compare your giving attitude with that of the Macedonians who were "begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints." How would your attitude need to change (if indeed it does) in order to be that excited about giving?

(c) For what does Paul express surprise ("not as we expected") in v. 5? Why do you think this surprises him? When you give, is it an extension of the fact that you have given yourself first to the Lord? Does your life daily reflect the fact that everything you are is first and foremost, given to the Lord?

(d) *Family:* Before the lesson, gather a dry sponge and a bowl of water (if I have used this illustration before for another purpose, please forgive me☺). You might even have a small mess to clean up to prove your point, but make it a dry mess so the sponge does not get wet too soon! Ask: "What is this sponge's purpose?" (to clean with) "Will it do its job well as it is?" (no, because it is dry) "What must happen before it will work?" (get wet) Dip the sponge in water and then clean your mess. Read 2 Cor. 8:1-5 and emphasize the point that just as the sponge needed to first be given to the water to effectively do its job, so we must first be given to the Lord to effectively do ours.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT**READ THE PASSAGE**

(a) **Read 2 Cor. 9. 6-15.** What does v. 7 tell us about God's view of the giver? What requirements does this verse set? If you are not going to give "cheerfully" does that mean that you should stay "uncheerful" and not give, or get cheerful and give?

(b) What is the foundation for our giving cheerfully (v. 8)? What do you learn about God and His character from this verse? How should this knowledge affect not only your giving, but your entire approach to life?

(c) Now we are ready to look at v. 6. The promise is clear (sowing and reaping are connected) and the provision and sufficiency of God is clear. Spend a few moments in prayer asking God to help you decide to reap bountifully, with a non-reluctant & cheerful heart, so that you will have all sufficiency in all things at all times for every good work He has for you!

(d) *Family:* You will need some sort of treat (like M & Ms or grapes) and a dispenser (even a baggie which you will cut the corner of once it is filled). Place a small amount of the treat in a baggie, then cut the corner so it will be dispensed to one member of your family. Take another baggie (or the same one as you plug the hole), fill it to the maximum with the treat, and dispense its contents to another family member. Begin a discussion ("What's wrong" or "Wow, you got a lot more than her") so that your family shares their concerns about the "unfairness" of the dispensing. Read 2 Cor. 9:6-8 and show them that one "reaped" more because more was "sown," and that God (teach v. 8 about God's ability & desire to act for His glory) will bless the cheerful giver who sows bountifully.

DATE: January 16, 2011

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Grace Giving