



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

Excel in the Grace of Giving! October 21-23, 2017

(2 Corinthians 8:1–12) ¹ And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. ⁵ 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. ⁶ So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ 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. ⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. ¹² For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

1. Are you a “Jack of all trades, master of none”? Share with the group the most impressive repair you’ve made or greatest feat you’ve accomplished. And/or share with the group something you’ve failed at miserably, proving you should stick to your “day job.”
2. How did the Macedonian Christians “surprise” Paul and his missionary team? Explain why their actions should have been expected.

3. Paul says that the Macedonian Christians “gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will.” (v.5)
 - a. Is Paul describing two acts or one? Explain your answer.
 - b. Discuss some ways in which a Christian’s financial offerings are a gift of “self” to God.
4. Paul says that by means of the collection he’s gathering, he wants to “test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.” (v.8) Explain the purpose and benefits of such a test in your own faith-life. (consider the sermon’s “back surgery” illustration)
5. How was Jesus rich? How did he become poor? How are you rich through his poverty? How does “your wealth in Christ” help you in the decisions you make about the offerings you give to the Lord and his work?
6. God’s grace to us in Jesus fills us with holy desires. What kinds of thoughts can distract and prevent us from acting on those desires? To what do you attribute these distractions?
7. What advice does Paul offer in the closing verses that will counter our fears and doubts and move us to “finish” the plans we make to honor the Lord with our wealth.
8. Share with the group something you learned from these verses that will make you a more joyful “giver.”
9. Retell the sermon illustration about the homeless man. How can you use this illustration to share the good news of Jesus with a family member, friend or coworker?