

**Sermon Discussion Guide**  
**March 3, 2024**  
**2 Corinthians 8:1-10, 9:6-12**  
**“Grace, Gratitude, and Generosity” (Hope Overflowing Sermon Series)**

Hope is continuing a sermon series alongside our Hope Overflowing Initiative. We are looking together at what the Bible has to say about why and how we spend what we are given (our time, money, abilities, etc).

We’re spending 6 weeks tracing how God’s grace stirs up our *gratitude*, and how this gratitude overflows into *generosity*- a generosity poured out into this world and into the lives of others. These are actions we’re calling “grace, gratitude, and generosity.”

This 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday we will continue to look at what generosity looks like.

Leader’s Notes:

(1) In this part of his letter Paul is writing to the Corinthian Church to ask them to follow through on their previous promise to give money to the relief fund for the Jerusalem Church.

- This is a difficult ask culturally for two reasons:
  - (1) The Corinthians are mostly Greeks and Romans (“Gentiles”) and the Jerusalem Christians are mostly Jewish. There was tension between these two ethnic groups.
  - (2) Paul has promised the persecuted and impoverished Macedonian Church that the wealthy Corinthian Church will give generously to the cause.
- For the gospel’s sake, Paul refuses to command the Corinthians to give, nor does he want them to do it “sparingly,” “under compulsion,” or “reluctantly.”

(2) Please read through all the questions ahead of time. You will need to be selective, and not ask all the questions. There are more than a healthy discussion can handle.

Also, the un-bolded and un-numbered questions that are indented-to-the-right and below are meant as follow-up questions for the main questions that are bolded and numbered. Use the follow up questions if the main question are too difficult or too easy, or to take the conversation deeper.

**Examine.** *Taking a closer look at the passage*

Read aloud 2 Corinthians 8:1-10 and 9:6-12.

1. **What is one comment that hearing this passage made you think of?**
  - Does anyone else in the group want to interact with this thought?
  - What other thoughts come to mind? (Different or similar thoughts?)
2. **What seems like the main idea or take-away in your own words?**
  - Or, why do you feel like God included this passage in the Bible?

- What do you think 2 Corinthians 8-9 has to do with following Jesus?  
(What was the main point/take-away from the sermon on this passage?)

**Discuss.** Studying the passage (using the sermon) to observe and interpret

± **Apply.** Making the connection from thinking to action, from their lives to ours

3. In your own words, what situation (or potential problem) is Paul addressing in this section of his letter? (Feel free to use Sunday's sermon or Leader Note #1.)
4. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 again, out-loud. What gets Paul excited about the Macedonian churches?
  - Why do you think Paul uses the phrase "the grace of God" to describe the situation?
  - Pick out a few phrases that describe the kind of giving they practiced?
  - How do you think it would feel to give like that?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 8:6-8, 10 again, aloud. What is Paul saying about the Corinthian Church in your own words?
  - What is he excited about for them?
  - What "act of grace" is he asking them to excel in? (And why is that?)
6. Read 2 Corinthians 8:9 aloud, twice (if you can in two different translations). How does this truth leads us to give "willingly," "bountifully," and "cheerfully"?
  - How is Jesus' life and death a good example, to imitate?
  - How is Jesus' life and death more than a good example, to transform us?
  - What would it look like to give willingly and cheerfully?
7. What is *easiest* to be generous with: time, money, relationships, or something else? What is *hardest* to be generous with: time, money, relationships, or something else?
8. What do you think gets in the way of you giving more generously?
9. Verses 6-10 call our resources (like time and money) seed for sowing "righteousness" (truth, healing, and peace). Where in your daily world would you like to see your time and money go to?
  - Where in your daily world (people and places you have contact with) needs truth?
  - Where in your daily world needs healing?
  - Where in your daily world needs peace?
10. [For this question, you can have the group answer it silently in their hearts and minds or write an answer down in their phone notes and/or ask them to share their answers aloud.]

What do I need to say “no” to on my calendar or in my finances, in order to say “yes” to the needs of the world and the church?

**Prayer.** How does this topic or passage lead me to pray and how can we pray for each other?

- Take several moments to adore God’s generosity.  
(This might look like sitting still in silence, speaking aloud words or phrases that come to mind, or writing down a few of your favorite things about God.)
- Take a few moments to ask God to pour out His love richly into your heart, stirring you with gratitude and joy for who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do.
- Choose a person to pray one of the following scripted prayers aloud for the group:
  - *We welcome all that God has so generously given me. We welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons, situations, and conditions. We let go of our desire for power and control. We let go of our desire for affection, esteem, approval, and pleasure. We let go of our desire for survival and security. We let go of our desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself. We open ourselves to the love and presence of God and God's action within. Amen.*  

(Adapted from Thomas Keating’s Welcoming Prayer)
  - *Lord God, able to make all grace abound, would you make our decision to give cheerful, not reluctant or under compulsion? Would you help us to give self-sacrificially- trusting God will enrich us to do it, overflowing in many thanksgivings to God? Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift of Christ in you, the hope of glory!*