

THE GRACE OF GIVING

(2Cor 8:1-15)

God desires that we EXCEL _____

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. (2Cor 8:1-2) The Macedonian churches (MC) gave joyfully, so

1. GIVE JOYFULLY

In 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. (2Cor 8:2-3) The MC gave when they didn't have it, so

2. GIVE BEYOND YOUR MEANS (sometimes)

Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. (2Cor 8:3-4) The MC viewed giving as a gift, a privilege, so

3. VIEW GIVING AS A GIFT

And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. (2Cor 8:5) MC giving was a result of having given themselves to the Lord, so

4. GIVE YOURSELF TO GOD FIRST

But 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. (2Cor 8:7-8)
The MC excelled in many areas; giving was one of them, so

5. VIEW GIVING AS AN EXCELLENCE

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2Cor 8:9)
In Christ, we are richer than we realize, so

6. GIVING REFLECTS BELIEFS ABOUT WEALTH

And here is my judgment 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 one does not have. (2Cor 8:10-12)
In Christ, we must follow through and give as able, so

7. GIVE ACCORDING TO YOUR MEANS (at all times)

At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, ¹⁵as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.” (2Cor 8:14-15)
In Christ, sharing should be commonplace, so

8. GIVE AND RECEIVE SO ALL HAVE ENOUGH

So, what?

A long time ago I dropped the word retirement out of my vocabulary. I don't believe in it. In the aging process, slowing up in tandem with one's diminishing strength might be a necessity. But retirement suggests, at least to me, a transition from activity to inactivity, from giving to taking. Where in the Scriptures does one find permission to do that? We are called, at all times of our lives, to be generous with our time. Most people think of generosity in terms of the almighty dollar. But generosity is a much larger issue than just money. We are talking about a way of life that begins with this question: What of me can be shared, given away?

(Gordon MacDonald, *A Resilient Life*)