

THE GRACE OF GIVING

(Learning by Example—2Cor 8:1-15)

1. REMEMBERING—Whose example has been an inspiration to you, in what areas, and why?

2. REFLECTING—What have you done to aspire to achieve the level of excellence of the ones who inspired you, if anything?

3. DISCOVERING—In 2Cor 8:1-15, Paul is affirming and challenging the church members in Corinth by holding up the Macedonian churches (Philippians, Thessalonians, Bereans, etc.) as an example. He makes this clear when he writes: *I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others (8)*. However, you should note that the very example he calls them to imitate was a result of the grace of God. Paul begins: *And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about **the grace that God has given** the Macedonian churches (1)*. So, even while holding up the Macedonian churches as a great example, he is highlighting the grace of God. His opening line begs the question, “How did God display his grace to the Macedonian churches?” He answers that question immediately: *In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity (2)*.

With this background in mind, turn to the following verses in your Bible and list on the lines how Paul holds up the Macedonian churches (MC), the Corinthian church, Jesus, and the Jews receiving manna in Exodus 16 as examples. Then include a list of the implications for us.

2-3 MC: _____

Us: _____

3-4 MC: _____

Us: _____

5 MC: _____

Us: _____

9 Jesus: _____

Us: _____

10-12

Corinth:

Us:

13-15

Jews

Us:

4. **CONNECTING**—What are the most profound implications for you life that you listed on your “Us” lines above?

5. **RESPONDING**—This week, review these notes, and with your answers in front of you, choose to do one of the following (or make up your own!). **According to 2Corinthians 8:1-15:**
 - Draw a diagram explaining in sequential order, how giving works
 - Write a poem expressing the biblical guidelines about giving
 - Sketch a drawing that reflects the principles about giving and/or the examples Paul holds up
 - Write a news broadcast about the Macedonian churches for the Apostle Paul reporting
 - Search online and collect some quotes from your favorite authors about examples or giving
 - Design a learning experience for an adult Sunday school class on “Principles of Giving” that you would teach based on this passage
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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*)