



2 CORINTHIANS - SMALL GROUP SERIES

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Week 3: 2 Corinthians 8-9; 10:3-5

Big Ideas: Generosity; living differently than everyone else.

INTRODUCTION

Last week we looked at 2 Corinthians 4-7. This week we'll look at chapters 8-9 and the beginning of chapter 10.

Chapters 8-9 are all about generosity.

The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem fell into famine, and Paul was collecting money from the various churches he had started to help them.

All those churches gave. But the Corinthian church hadn't given anything because they were upset with Paul.

He had an issue with this, but it wasn't about the money. It was just another example that they had not been transformed by the Gospel.

Paul begins to remind that how Jesus transforms our lives from the inside out and that the Gospel is a story of generosity.

He tells the story of Jesus through financial metaphors.

He makes the point that Jesus gave up honor as God, to die on a cross so that we who are stuck in sin can be given a new life through God's grace.

When we surrender our lives to Jesus, we allow God's grace to transform us into generous person, from the inside out.

The beginning of chapter 10 is all about how we, as followers of Christ, operate in an entirely different way than everyone else.

Notes to Youth Leader:

- *All Bible references in this series are from the NCV version unless otherwise noted. Feel free to use whatever version of the Bible that best works for you and your group.*

2 CORINTHIANS 8-10

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-4:

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace God gave the churches in Macedonia. They have been tested by great troubles, and they are very poor. But they gave much because of their great joy. I can tell you that they gave as much as they were able and even more than they could afford. No one told them to do it. But they begged and pleaded with us to let them share in this service for God's people.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:10-11:

This is what I think you should do: Last year you were the first to want to give, and you were the first who gave. So now finish the work you started. Then your "doing" will be equal to your "wanting to do." Give from what you have.

Say: Paul opens by telling the Corinthian church that the churches in Macedonia gave to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

He mentioned that they were poor and experiencing troubles of their own, but they happily gave what they could. They were actually excited to give what they could!

He goes on to encourage the Corinthian church to give as well.

He then encourages them to match their "doing" with what they're "wanting to do."

He's speaking to you and me, too, about generosity. Even if we don't have a lot or are experiencing our own problems, those who follow Jesus are known for their generosity.

Generosity when it comes to money, but it doesn't stop there. It flows into every area of our lives.

Being transformed by Jesus means that our lives are not about ourselves. Our lives are meant to serve others.

It's possible to "want to do" good things but not actually do them. The goal is to put our generosity into action.

Ask:

- Who is the most generous person you know? Give us some examples of ways they're generous.
- In what ways would you like to be more generous?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8:

Remember this: The person who plants a little will have a small harvest, but the person who plants a lot will have a big harvest. Each of you should give as you have decided in your heart to give. You should not be sad when you give, and you should not give because you feel forced to give. God loves the person who gives happily. And God can give you more blessings than you need. Then you will always have plenty of everything—enough to give to every good work.

Say: Let's break down what Paul says in this passage.

First, let's talk about harvest. If a farmer plants a small number of seeds, he'll have a small harvest. And if he plants a lot of seeds, he'll have a big harvest.

The same is true when it comes to generosity. The more we freely give our money, time, attention, and focus to others, the more it will come back to us.

If we're "others-focused," then people will feel our love, empathy, and compassion. And they're more likely to treat us with love and acceptance.

Second, we're not generous because there is something in it for us. There's no need to be sad because we feel forced to give.

We're giving because we've experienced the generosity of God through Jesus. We're on the receiving end of an amazing gift that we cannot earn.

When we experience that truth deep within our hearts, something shifts. We become generous people through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives!

We freely give to others with a happy heart.

Wow! So awesome, right??

Ask:

- Have you ever experienced something so amazing you wanted to share it with someone else (ex: video, movie, song, etc.)? Explain.
- How is that like or unlike generosity?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:10-12:

God is the One who gives seed to the farmer and bread for food. He will give you all the seed you need and make it grow so there will be a great harvest from your

goodness. He will make you rich in every way so that you can always give freely. And your giving through us will cause many to give thanks to God. This service you do not only helps the needs of God's people, it also brings many more thanks to God.

Ask: What do you think Paul is trying to say here? (Get a few responses)

Paul is saying that God will provide enough for the Corinthian church to help give to those in need.

But he's saying more than that.

He's telling us that God will always provide enough money, love, acceptance, time, energy, and attention to give away to others.

When we live a life that is "others-focused," God will always give us enough to give to others.

He's also saying that a generous life will affect those around us who are watching.

They'll acknowledge God's goodness by our actions.

Ask:

- Have you ever been really excited and grateful to give something to someone else? Explain.
- Would you say that is or isn't an example of God providing for you? Explain.

We now move into Chapter 10.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5:

We do live in the world, but we do not fight in the same way the world fights. We fight with weapons that are different from those the world uses. Our weapons have power from God that can destroy the enemy's strong places. We destroy people's arguments and every proud thing that raises itself against the knowledge of God. We capture every thought and make it give up and obey Christ.

Say: In chapter 10, Paul is back to defending his teaching and authority. He starts with this passage.

He's saying that as followers of Jesus, we operate in an entirely different way than everyone else.

We have access to the very real power of God to tear down anything that comes in opposition to God. In Paul's case, the false teachers were the problem.

For us...

When lies are thrown at us, we have the truth.

When people put us down, we can remember our identity in Christ.

When people attack us for doing the right thing, we can rely on God's strength to endure.

As followers of Jesus, we have access to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives to face anything that opposes God or His Word.

Ask:

- Have you ever been attacked by others? If so, explain.
- How did you get through the situation?
- Have you ever been really hard on yourself in your own head (ex: putting yourself down, beating yourself up, etc.)? Explain.
- How would you describe the meaning of **2 Corinthians 10:5** in your own words?

We destroy people's arguments and every proud thing that raises itself against the knowledge of God. We capture every thought and make it give up and obey Christ.

End the lesson by asking for prayer requests and taking a moment to pray together for each other.