

THE WHOLE STORY

From Genesis to Revelation

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Introduction:

In the clearest explanation and call for generosity in the entire Bible, Paul appeals to one single motive for giving: the grace of God in Christ. Christians don't give because they are commanded to or because it frees one's life from materialism. Christians give because they know that God has giving everything to redeem them from the penalty of sin and death - giving his own son as a ransom for all humanity. That grace, the free gift given by God through Jesus, is the motivation for all Christian giving. Jesus said that those who are forgiven much also forgive much. The same applies for generosity; those who have been given much give generously in return.

This Week's Main Focus:

The gospel shows us the incomparable generosity of Christ, so that God would be glorified in the way we respond to his generosity.

The way we treat others and handle our material possessions speaks volumes about our belief in the gospel and our commitment to God's mission. Second Corinthians 8-9 is written to members of the church in Corinth who, at one time, had responded favorably to helping others, but had not yet "put their money where their mouth is." So, Paul tells them about another church in their region, the Macedonian church, that responded generously and joyfully to the needs of others while in a difficult time of their own.

Here, Paul addresses the very question so many of us ask about our giving: *How much is enough?* Notice Paul's aim in relation to their giving. He is not trying to raise a large amount of money by inciting competition between churches and believers. Instead, he does not even mention the actual amount the Macedonians give to show that the amount does not matter, only the spirit behind the giving.

Joyfulness and a willingness of attitude are the markers for how much Paul is calling the church in Corinth to give and those are the same measures for us today. If we give joyfully and willingly then God will be glorified no matter the means that we find ourselves with. In fact, as the Macedonian church is an example of, an abundance of joy diminishes the effect that meager means have in our ability to be generous, and therefore love, our fellow believers and the world.

***At the end of this guide you will find *The Gospel Wheel*. This is Summit's tool for helping us make balanced, holistic disciples while staying centered on the gospel.

***Also, there is a Summit Family Ministry discussion guide for parents and children. Small Group Leaders, please make sure you point the parents in your group to this great resource for our families!

Reflection Question:

1) How has your time at the Summit shaped your view of living a biblically generous life?

Bible Study Questions: Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

2) The Macedonian churches are set as an example of how Christians should approach generosity. Using verses 1-5 make a list of how Paul describes the Macedonian churches' circumstances at this time. What from your list was the most important factor for their generosity?

3) Using the list you made from question #2, what was motivating the radical generosity of the Macedonian churches that we observe in this passage?

4) Looking at verses 6-7, why is it important to grow as a complete disciple, not neglecting any one aspect?

5) Notice how the work of Jesus (v. 9) is used as our example and our fuel to give. How does a proper understanding of the gospel actually increase our love for God and people while decreasing our love for self and possessions?

6) As we stated above, the ultimate goal of our generosity is not first to supply a need but to glorify God. Why is it important for you, as an individual Christian and the church (as a collective body) to be generous as a means to give God glory?

Bonus Question) Share a time when you were in need and God sent aid to you. Ask your group to split up in half. One half shares a way God sent an individual and the other half shares how God used the church.

Group Application Questions:

7) Think about how you and your family practice generosity. What typically motivates your giving? Guilt, duty, expectations of God's blessing, response to circumstances, thankfulness, love?

8) Tim Keller has said that when people are committing adultery, they know they are doing it. Hardly anyone who loves money too much knows that is the case. How can our small group help keep one another accountable toward living a life of generosity?

Prayer: *Read Matthew 6:21*

- Individually reflect on Matthew 6:21 and ask God in prayer:
 - Where is most of my treasure currently?
 - What does this mean about where my heart currently is?
- Have someone pray for your group that:
 - Accumulation of worldly treasure would not prevent your hearts from trusting in God.
 - You would all have renewed hearts that dictate how we will use our treasure.

THE GENEROSITY LADDER



The Generosity Ladder is a tool designed to help people move from money being their god to money being a tool for God's Kingdom. The Generosity Ladder focuses on behaviors and attitudes of our hearts rather than on amounts or percentages, further transforming us into the likeness of Christ.

Each rung of the ladder represents growth in a lifestyle of generosity and sacrifice. These are not rungs you slowly ascend to get to God but simply a way to evaluate your growth in generosity. Scripture encourages us to grow in every facet of our walk with Christ, including the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Initial Giver

Who: Someone who has not yet given to The Summit Church. During the past two years, more than 3,200 people have taken a step of faith by making their first gift to the Kingdom of God through The Summit Church.

How: To become an *initial giver*, consider making your first gift to The Summit Church.

Consistent Giver

Who: Someone who is a regular giver, giving many times through recurring payments online. Consistent givers start to think of their giving in the same way they would about other expenses in their budget that are paid regardless of seasons of feast or famine. To provide more clarity, we've classified this as someone who makes six or more gifts per year.

How: To become a *consistent giver*, consider:

- Setting up a recurring gift through Summit's Online Giving or Auto Bill Pay at your bank.
- Budgeting specifically for giving in the same way you would your other monthly expenses (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
- Proactively scheduling on your calendar when you are going to consistently give.

Intentional Giver

Who: Intentional givers think about their giving in relation to other things they spend their money on. They consider a percentage or amount they want to consciously grow in their generosity. Intentional givers look at their budget and consider how their giving reflects their view of God and commitment to build his Kingdom.

How: To become an *intentional giver*, consider:

- Giving in relation to your other monthly financial commitments (such as your cell phone, mortgage/rent, insurance, etc.) and determining an intentional step to grow the priority of your giving.
- Choosing a percentage that would represent a new level of giving for you, potentially a tithe (Malachi 3:10).

Sacrificial Giver

Who: Someone who is no longer thinking, “What am I supposed to give?” but rather “What am I not giving and why?” This person is less concerned about the 10 or 15 percent and more concerned about the 90 or 85 percent. Sacrificial givers decide to make changes that cost them something in their lifestyle.

How: To become a *sacrificial giver*, consider:

- Looking at the dollars you are not giving and prayerfully considering if God is asking you to release a portion of those over to him.
- Evaluating if your giving is really costing you something or if it has become comfortable or routine (2 Samuel 24:24).
- Determining if there are resources God has blessed you with in the past (savings, stock, retirement, etc.) that God is asking you to release as a sacrifice to him.

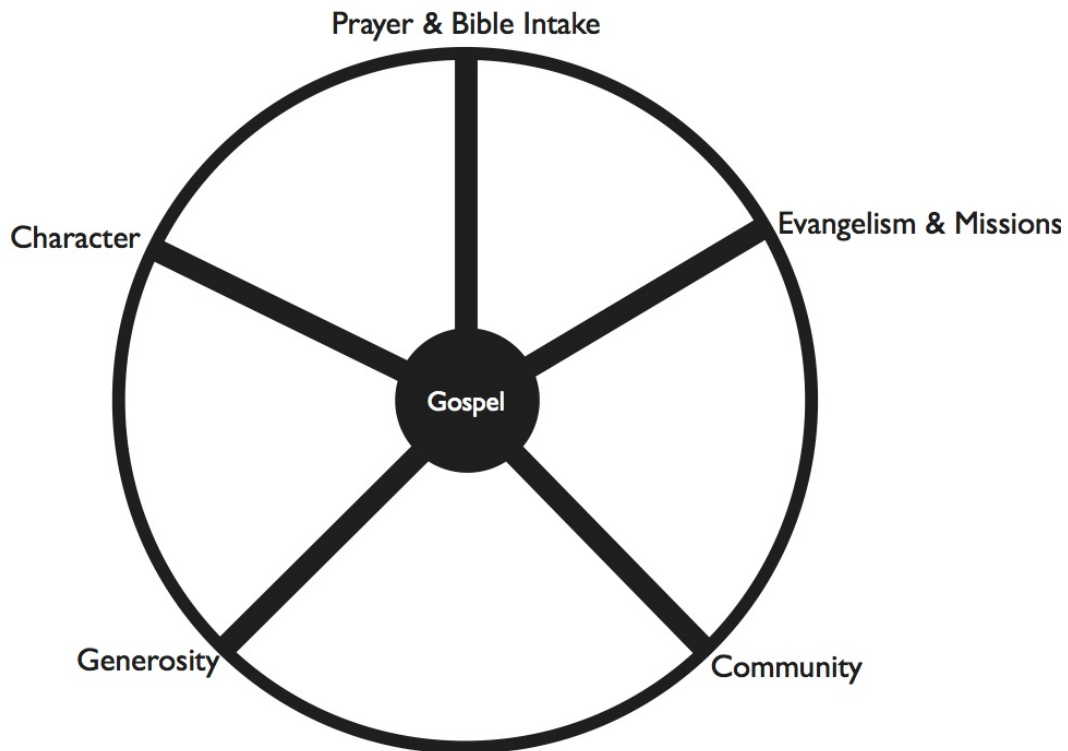
Legacy Giver

Who: Legacy givers are thinking past this year and moving toward long-term impact for their local church, their family, and eternity. They make decisions in the short-term that have longer-term effects on their giving capacity. Legacy givers consider the impact that every personal asset has on their ability to be generous. This person is no longer asking the question, “God, how much are you asking me to give?” Instead, this person is asking, “God, how much are you asking me to keep?”

How: To become a *legacy giver*, consider:

- Putting a cap on spending and saving so every additional dollar goes toward Kingdom giving;
- Setting a lifetime generosity goal (a specific number) for your family’s Kingdom giving over the course of your life;
- Engaging in estate planning (or revise your current plan) to accurately reflect your Kingdom giving priorities;
- Leveraging your own journey of generosity to encourage and inspire Kingdom generosity in the next generation (Proverbs 13:22).

The Gospel Wheel



The Gospel Wheel is a tool the Summit uses to help gauge our growth as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Center: A gospel-centered life

We want everyone to be changed by the power of the gospel. This means taking ourselves off the throne of our lives and putting God on the throne. When the gospel is the center of one's life, it redefines everything about that person, including the trajectory of his or her career, family, and future.

The Spokes: Fruit of the gospel

The gospel takes dead people and makes them alive — and that is no small change! When the gospel becomes the center of one's life, it starts to work its way from the inside out. These five spokes represent five key areas that one can assess if and how the gospel is advancing in one's life.

A Warning: Keeping the main thing the main thing

The gospel is the center of the wheel, not the spokes. Although one can measure his or her growth in the gospel by assessing these five spokes, the goal is to grow deeper in the gospel, not to master a spoke.

The Goal: Gospel-motivated transformation

A wheel works best when it's full and balanced. Growing in just two or three spokes does not improve a wheel; it actually makes it worse. In the same way, gospel-centered growth in all of these areas puts God's glory on display in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

SUMMIT FAMILY MINISTRY: MULTIPLY MOMENTS

Discussion Guide: Week 1

Use the following guide to help with discussions around the biblical call to a life of generosity.

Some practical tips:

- Set aside 10-15 minutes for discussion time
- A few ideas on when/where:
 - Use the front end of your dinner time together around the table for discussion. (*We suggest the front end because for most, once the food is gone...so is the attention span of the people around the table.*)
 - Carve out 15 minutes of time in your common living space for discussion time. Maybe turn off the television show you normally watch and redeem the time with discussion around the Scripture.
 - Replace this conversation with your normal bible reading time in the evenings

Discussion Questions:

Who can tell me what the word *stewardship* means?

- Stewardship- the responsible planning and management of resources.

What are our “resources” that you think God has provided us as a family?

(Work together to think through the things they are either already stewards of or will be or should be, etc. ...in the realms of Time, Talents, Treasure...until you feel that they have a pretty good grasp on the concept of stewardship)

Time- The way they spend it

Talent- The way they use their giftings

Treasure- The way they use their resources

This past week in my Small Group (this is you as a parent talking), we learned that the ultimate goal of our generosity is not first to meet a need out there, but to glorify God. Why do you think it is important for us as a family to use our resources to glorify God?

Read Matthew 6:19-21 as a family (*Have one of your children read it if applicable*)

Let's make a list of some ways we can use our resources to glorify God and bless other people.

Pray:

- Ask God to help your family see new areas of your life where you can be generous
- Ask God to help loosen the grip you have on “earthly treasures”
- Thank God for being our greatest treasure