



Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

2nd Corinthians 8 & 9 | June 11, 2017

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we conclude our series They Will Know Us By Our Fruit, looking at the marks of discipleship we are aiming for as a church, as we invite all people into a Christ-centered life in God's family.

II. Connecting with One Another

What's the best gift you've ever received? Why is it your favorite?

III. Study the Text

a. Read 2nd Corinthians 8.1-7

Throughout these two chapters, the Apostle Paul engages the topic of giving within the Corinthian church. The delicacy with which he engages this topic is evident: Never once does he use any of the Greek words for "money." Instead, his discussion is phrased very indirectly.

Why do you think this is the case?

Have you ever been in a similarly delicate situation? How did you handle it?

b. Look again at verses 1-7, noting Paul's use of the term "grace."

How is Paul using that word in this section? Why do you think he does so?

c. Read 2nd Corinthians 8.8-15

In verse 9, Paul engages the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Why do you think he does so in the middle of a chapter on giving?

In verse 12, Paul writes, "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have." What do you think he means?

d. In verse 15, Paul quotes from Exodus 16.18. It has been written, "In this way he reminds the Corinthians not just of the particular incident of the manna in the wilderness but of the whole Exodus story. He reminds them how God renews and redeems his people as they travel through the present life and world toward their promised inheritance. Paul is grounding his urgent appeal for generous giving both on the grace of the Lord Jesus and on the underlying purpose of God, which is to ensure that his people do not go hungry on their journey home."

What do you make of this quote? How can an urgent appeal be based on both God's grace and God's purpose?

- e. Read 2nd Corinthians 8.16-24

Paul's reference to these men anonymously may reveal an anxiety that if this letter fell into the wrong hands, they would be in danger while carrying a large sum of money. Whatever the reason, why do you think Paul finds it important to send several others with Titus?

What kinds of precautions or procedures are necessary today in fundraising and finances? Why?

- f. Read 2nd Corinthians 9.1-5

What specific things does Paul want to be sure of in collecting this gift?

- g. Read 2nd Corinthians 9.6-15

N.T. Wright writes, "Attempting to tell people to do something they don't particularly want to do is difficult. If you are a forceful enough character, people may eventually do what you want; but they won't enjoy it, and you may damage some relationships on the way. It is far better to turn their minds around so that they see everything – God, the world, the church, themselves – in a different light, and then the behavior will come naturally."

Do you agree with Wright? Why or why not?

Recall that the word "repent" means simply "to change one's mind." How has God changed your mind about something?

- h. N.T. Wright continues, "How is Paul attempting to turn the minds of the Corinthians around in 9.6-15 and give them a new, bigger way of seeing things?"
- i. Howard Dayton, Jr. writes, "Jesus talked much about money. Sixteen of the thirty-eight parables were concerned with how to handle money and possessions. In the Gospels, an amazing one out of ten verses (288 in all) deal directly with the subject of money. The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions."

Why do you think that is?

How would you summarize Jesus' teaching on money and possessions?

- j. How are you held back from giving generously to God's mission or God's people?
- k. Where could God be calling you to be an increasingly generous and cheerful giver?
- l. Spend some time thinking through the 8 characteristics of discipleship we've looked at through this series:

Welcoming Warmly

Sharing Openly

Worshipping Joyfully

Thinking Biblically

Caring Deeply

Praying Earnestly

Serving Willingly

Giving Generously

What one or two characteristics do you believe God is calling you to grow in today?

How could your doing so bring God glory?

How would doing so impact your life?

What step(s) could you take to grow in this area?

IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to reveal to you any obstacles in your heart that keep you from generous and cheerful giving,
- b. Pray that the leaders of Good Shepherd would be wise in allocating our resources to bring the most impact for "Inviting all people to grow into a Christ-centered life in God's family,"
- c. Lift up those you know locally or around the world who are in need, that God would supply their needs through His miraculous provision and/or the giving of believers.