

# RockPointe Church Small Groups

## Kingdom Moments Sermon Series

Lesson 3: Faithful Stewards - Understanding His Ways – Fall, 2019

### 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

## MAIN POINT

As we abide with Jesus and join Him in His work, our joyful generosity will follow.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Other than your family, what is the longest relationship you have? When, where, and how did that relationship begin?**

**How have you seen it change over the years?**

**Have you found that you have taken on characteristics, preferences, or dislikes of that person over time? Why do you think we have a tendency to do that?**

The longer we are around particular people, the better we know them. We know what they like and dislike, what makes them happy, and what makes them sad. We might even adopt a similar style of dress or even come to enjoy the things they do. As we grow in our relationship with Jesus, this is exactly what is supposed to happen. As we abide with Jesus and join Him in His work, joyful generosity will follow because Jesus is the greatest giver.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.**

Sacrificial generosity was a practice of the church established at its conception. In these verses from 2 Corinthians, we read Paul's reminder to the Corinthian church that generosity is fundamental in their ministry to one another. Paul told the Corinthians about the generosity of the Macedonian churches that—despite their own poverty—had raised money for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Even though they were poor, they gave generously because the Christian community was in need.

**What do you learn about the Macedonians from their giving? What amazed Paul about their giving?**

**What “grace” had God given the Macedonian Christians?**

The giving discussed in 2 Corinthians 8 was a special offering, not the regular church offering, and it was collected to meet a special need. Paul had hoped the Christians in Macedonia would support the offering. But because of their own deprived circumstances, he evidently did not expect they would give very much. Their giving was spontaneous and voluntary, fueled by grace, not by pressure.

**What four principles about giving do you observe in this passage?**

**Why is it significant that the Macedonians gave both “according to” and “beyond” their ability?**

The Macedonians knew what it was to be in need, because they had experienced poverty—yet they gave generously. Anyone can be generous. But for Christians, we have no choice—the love of Christ compels us to joyful generosity.

**What do we communicate to our community when we sacrifice our time, money, or other resources to meet their needs?**

**Why is it important for you, as an individual Christian, to be generous? Why is it important for the church, as a collective body, to be generous?**

**What, according to verse 9, is the ultimate motivation for generosity?**

This verse reveals what motivates all believers to willingly sacrifice for the sake of others—Jesus’ sacrifice for us. Jesus practiced and taught sacrificial giving. Gratitude for what Jesus has done for us motivates us to demonstrate responsible stewardship of our lives and our possessions.

**Does this verse mean that God’s plan for all Christians is to become rich? If not, what riches is Paul talking about?**

**How did the Macedonian Christians show that they understood what Christ has done for them?**

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Ephesians 1:3-14.

**How does this passage show how Christ has made us rich in Him?**

**Which of the spiritual blessings in this passage is the most meaningful to you right now? Why?**

**Why might tangible giving of our resources be one right response to the generosity of Jesus we see in these verses?**

Jesus has made us rich in Him. We have been blessed, as Paul said, with every spiritual blessing in the heavens. Because God has been so generous with us, one of the ways we respond to that generosity is being generous with others. When we do so, we show that we are beginning to grasp part of the immensity of the generosity of Jesus.

**Why is it important that our generosity is done joyously?**

**Share a personal story of when you have experienced joy in giving. Why do you think generosity brings so much joy when motivated by the gospel?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How can God’s ultimate gift to us compel us to give? What can you do to keep this truth in your thoughts this week?**

**Carry some extra cash in your pocket this week. As you go about your day, ask God for an opportunity to give. As you do, begin to pray about God’s desire for you to give to the mission of our church.**

**How has the generosity of others to our church impacted the lives of you and your family?**

## **How is the gospel going to be furthered by our church coming together to show and practice extreme generosity?**

### **PRAYER**

Pray that God would continually remind your group that giving can be done cheerfully, not reluctantly. Also pray that our stewardship would ultimately glorify God and bring others into His kingdom.

### **COMMENTARY**

#### **2 Corinthians 8:1-15**

8:1 The churches of Macedonia were congregations in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (Ac 16-17).

8:2-3 These churches had been born in affliction (Ac 16-17). Moreover, they were limited in financial resources; yet these factors had not impeded their giving.

8:4 The same word (ministry) previously used to describe Christian service (4:1; 5:18; 6:3) is now used to describe Christian giving. Financial stewardship is ministry.

8:5 Here is the key to understanding giving as a ministry. When believers offer themselves wholly to the Lord, they have no difficulty in offering their wallets to Him.

8:6 Paul's collection for the Jerusalem Christians had been a long-term project. He had evidently put Titus in charge of at least part of it. The Corinthians had "been prepared since last year" (9:2) to give, but had not completed the task. The recent trouble in Corinth, causing Paul's sorrowful visit and the severe letter, had surely been the major factor. Now that the Corinthians were restored, it was time to finish the task, but it would only be done the right way if it was prompted by God's grace (v. 1).

8:7 The Corinthians were more affluent than the Macedonians; therefore they could give more generously, and this is what Paul expected to happen (excel also in this grace).

8:8 The generosity of the Macedonians set a challenging standard for giving. Only love for God by His grace would enable the Corinthians to pass this test.

8:9 Jesus' self-sacrifice is an even higher standard of giving. He willingly exchanged all the wealth of His deity for the poverty of the incarnation.

8:12 God is more concerned with the quality of giving than with the quantity, as with the widow who gave two coins (Lk 21:1-4).

8:13-14 A congregation that has been generous may later find itself in need of help from others.

8:15 The quotation from Ex 16:18 comes from the Israelites' first experience with gathering daily manna. Paul drew an analogy. The person who gathered much was a strong Israelite (like the wealthy Corinthians), while the person who gathered little was a weak—sick or aged—Israelite (like the impoverished saints in Jerusalem). Just as there had been an equitable distribution of manna among the Israelites, so there should be a fair sharing of resources among Christians.

#### **Ephesians 1:3-14**

1:3-14 Following the greeting in verses 1-2 is a sequence of phrases about the marvelous spiritual blessing(s) that belong to the church in Jesus Christ. All of these blessings are assured to each

believer, for they flow from God's grace, wisdom, and eternal purpose. These 12 verses form one long sentence in the Greek.

1:3 Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: This section often is called "the doxology" because it recites what God has done and is an expression to Him of worship, praise, and honor. Similar doxologies are found in 2Co 1:3 and 1Pe 1:3. In this majestic section, Paul wrote of the blessings that belong to the church through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God has blessed us with all of the blessings in the heavenly realms. These blessings include our union with Christ; being seated with Him in the heavenlies; and our adoption, redemption, and election. All spiritual gifts and service abilities also flow out of these spiritual blessings that God gives to every believer at the time of salvation.

1:4 He chose us in Him: The idea of divine election flows out of the important theme of spiritual union, for election is "in Christ." The doctrine of election is one of the most central and one of the most misunderstood teachings of the Bible. At its most basic level, election refers to God's plan whereby He accomplishes His will. The meaning of election is best understood as God's Sovereign initiative in bringing persons to faith in Christ, resulting in a special covenant relationship with Him. This theme serves as a foundation to the entire opening section of Ephesians, which includes the phrases: God "chose us" (v. 4); "predestined us" (v. 5); and "predestined according to the purpose" (v. 11). Paul's focus on the Christ-centered character of election is vitally important. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. This indicates the centrality of the gospel in God's plan for history. We are chosen to be holy and blameless. Holiness and blamelessness are the results, not the basis, of God's election.

1:5 He predestined us: All of God's blessings are in accord with sovereign predestination, which is purposeful and grounded in love. Predestination refers to the consistent and coherent intention of God's will, an eternal decision rendering certain that which will come to pass. Adopted through Jesus Christ: Through God's purposeful love, believers are adopted into God's family. Adoption is the legal declaration that we are God's children with all of the rights, privileges, and duties belonging to believers.

1:6 The ultimate purpose of God's redemption plan is the praise of His glorious grace. Grace is God's free favor to the undeserving. Believers are given grace simply because God is gracious.

1:7 Redemption in Him means that believers have been bought with the price of Christ's blood (1Co 6:20; 1Tim 2:6; 1Pe 1:18-19) and have been redeemed from sin, Satan, and the misery of sinful self. The result of redemption is a sending away or banishment of our sin debt, resulting in complete forgiveness.

1:9 God's grace has been lavished upon believers in accordance with the mystery of His will. Paul does not mean that God's will is secret in the way that the mystery religions of Asia Minor taught. The mystery religions held that the divine expectations were fundamentally hidden from all but an enlightened few, whereas for Paul "mystery" meant the revelation of a component of God's plan so that it now can be understood by all (3:2-13). Specifically the mystery involved the fulfillment of God's plan to bring everything together in the Messiah.

1:10 Days of fulfillment: The goal of history is based on God's divine purpose concerning the crucified redeemer, Jesus the Messiah—for whom, through whom, and in whom are all things. The goal is to establish a new world order of which Jesus Christ is the acknowledged Head (v. 22). He is the head of a reunited universe. He now rules and reigns from God's right hand; one day He will establish His kingdom and bring in the new heavens and the new earth, fulfilling and finalizing God's redemptive purpose. This is what is involved in bringing together things in heaven and things on earth in Him.

1:11 Received an inheritance: Paul discusses the end result of redemption from a standpoint that stretches from eternity past to eternity future. The recipients of this inheritance are people whom God has chosen and predestined. They come to faith in Christ not by chance, coercion, or unaided choice, but by the enabling of God's Spirit. Building on OT themes, Paul envisioned those who have received this inheritance as standing in continuity with the covenant people of OT times.

1:13 Sealed with the promised Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit was promised by the prophets and by Jesus (Joel 2:28-29; Jn 14:15-26; 16:5-16). The Spirit is described as both a seal showing ownership, and as a pledge pointing to future redemption. Though believers have not yet experienced redemption in full, God will bring about final redemption (life in His immediate presence) for all who have received the Spirit (Eph 1:14).