



## A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of June 11, 2017

WEPC small groups meet in homes across Richmond every week to participate in Jesus Christ's mission to Richmond, enjoy fellowship, study God's Word, pray together, and explore the fruit of the Gospel on our lives. Simply put, these groups are small enough to be the church to one another, and they serve as bridges between WEPC and the community where God has planted us. It is a place where the church can go deeper in the worship of God and further in Christ's mission.

Note to Discussion Leaders: Have members read the Bible passage in the group meeting. This is a "worship discussion" guide, and our reflections and applications are grounded in Scripture. Read through this guide before meeting with the group. You do not need to work through the whole guide. Decide which points would be most helpful for the time of meeting together, and use them as a starting point for your time together.

### II Corinthians 8:1-24 *"This Grace of Giving"*

<sup>1</sup> We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup> for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup> For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup> begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— <sup>5</sup> and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. <sup>6</sup> Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. <sup>7</sup> But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

<sup>8</sup> I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. <sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. <sup>10</sup> And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. <sup>11</sup> So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. <sup>12</sup> For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. <sup>13</sup> For I do not mean that others should be eased

and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness <sup>14</sup> your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. <sup>15</sup> As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

<sup>16</sup> But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. <sup>17</sup> For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. <sup>18</sup> With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. <sup>19</sup> And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will. <sup>20</sup> We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, <sup>21</sup> for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man. <sup>22</sup> And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. <sup>23</sup> As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. <sup>24</sup> So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

- Who or what has taught you to be generous?
- Christians are often hesitant to be open about giving, and churches are careful not to talk too much about money. Do you think this is true, and if so why? Do you think such hesitancy is a good thing?
- In II Corinthians 7 we read that Titus brought good news to Paul about the Corinthian response to his last letter. It appears that there are other pastoral issues Paul wishes to address. Having affirmed his love for the Corinthians, explained his ministry to them, and called for ongoing acceptance in chapter 1-7, Paul begins in chapter 8 to address specific areas of spiritual growth. The first concerns the completion of a collection for poor Christians in Jerusalem also mentioned in [I Corinthians 16:1-4](#) and [Romans 15:25-28](#).
- Read II Corinthians 8:1-7. Paul urges the Corinthians to excel in the grace of generous giving (7). What is impressive about the giving of the Macedonian Christians?
- How does Paul describe the opportunity to give money to fellow Christians? Do these verses challenge common views of giving?
- Read II Corinthians 8:8-15. Paul takes care to ensure that he is not misunderstood. Rather than being a command, how does Paul view his appeal?
- Why does he reference the ministry of Jesus in vv.8-9?
- What principles for giving are outlined in vv.10-11, 12, and 13-15?
- Read II Corinthians 8:16-24. What steps does Paul take to administer the collection? Why does he do this?
- How can we help each other and the children of WEPC to follow Jesus in generous giving?
- What do think helps or hinders generosity? To what extent does generosity reflect the genuineness of love (8)?
- Re-read II Corinthians 8:9 aloud and use it as a guide to prayer for your group:
  - Ask God for a renewed vision of the Cross of Christ for WEPC.
  - Thank Jesus for all that He has provided.
  - Ask the Holy Spirit for power to be generous and lift up to needs of your family, friends, group, and the congregation to our Heavenly Father.

*Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, [kevin@wepc.org](mailto:kevin@wepc.org)  
 To hear sermons and access past study guides visit [www.wepc.org/archivedsermons](http://www.wepc.org/archivedsermons)*

## Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on II Corinthians 8:1-24

- The context for these two chapters on giving in II Corinthians 8 & 9: “Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.” ([I Corinthians 16:1-4](#))
- Now in chapters 8 and 9 he is urging the Corinthians to complete the offering once it has begun and Paul is making clear how that offering will be administered. It is a bold thing to do in light of his strained relationship with the Corinthians.
- One big picture thing to note about this request: He never uses once any of the Greek words for money itself. He, rather talks a lot about grace and about joy as the result of generosity.
- “When people talk about grace in church circles they are referring simply to the undeserved love and power which God showers on people in bringing them to experience all that Jesus died and rose again to give them. Here he is referring to grace as something not just that God does in and for them, but through them. What does it mean that God gave this grace to the churches of Macedonia? The work of God in Christ is now causing these people to be reckless in their generosity. He wants to see the same kind of thing happen to the Corinthians. He wants them to experience this grace in the same way.” (*Tom Wright*)
- In fact, he wants them to excel in this. What better way to demonstrate that grace has taken hold in their lives than for these predominantly Gentile churches give to the predominantly Jewish church in Jerusalem.
- “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich’ ([II Corinthians 8:9](#)). Jesus Christ is God Almighty, through whom the universe was made and who upholds all things by His power. He has existed as the glorious, perfect, and happy second Person of the Trinity from all eternity. And it was from this infinite height that He performed the unimaginable condescension to be born in a cattle stall and to die on a criminal’s cross, in order that we might be made rich. Not rich in money, but as verse two says: rich in joy and rich in liberality, and as verse 8 implies: rich in love. This is the grace of God that turns selfish people into joyful givers. The reason verse 9 should take away our selfishness and make us joyful and generous is that it takes away the only basis for selfishness. The basis for selfishness is the notion that giving less away and keeping more for ourselves will provide more happiness and fulfillment to our lives. But verse 9 shows that God’s purpose in sending his Son was to create joyful, loving, generous givers. Now if God values joyful, loving generosity so much as to give his beloved Son to create it in his people, then we can be absolutely assured that when we are more generous, we will be more happy and more fulfilled because God is bound to work mightily for those whose behavior he values so highly.” (*John Piper*)
- “Paul’s appeal is entirely shaped by the good news. The ‘love’ that he wants the Corinthians to demonstrate is nothing other than the love of Christ that they have come to know and experience. The Corinthian ‘doing’ is to arise entirely from what Christ has ‘done’ for them, and this not as mere gratitude but as a fresh experience of the grace of Christ. Paul’s joyful thanksgiving drives home the confession of God as the unqualified giver.” (*Mark Seifrid*)
- Not to mention that, once again, his confidence in Christ spills over into boasting about how the Corinthians will respond.
- And let’s not forget that Paul believes this generosity will benefit them. It will increase, in a practical way, their joy.
- All giving expresses that we have been first given to by God.
- Generosity demonstrates the grace of God in our unity.
- Giving is an expression of the supernatural work of God in normal, everyday people in making them, compelled by the Good News of Jesus, to look more like their Savior.