



MAKING ROOM

Small Group Discussion Guide
JANUARY 14, 2018



PREPARATION

STUDY

Spend the week studying 2 Corinthians 8:1–15. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

DETERMINE

Many questions have been included in this guide. Read through this lesson to determine which questions will work best to encourage, push, and grow your group.

PRAY

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming weekend. Pray also for your time in this week's study and your group's openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT

Jesus gave Himself to others, and so should I.



GROUP DISCUSSION

CONFIDENTIALITY | What's said in the group stays in the group.

NO CROSS-TALK | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

NO FIXING | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

SHARING | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



INTRODUCTION

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

Generosity does not come naturally to us. Think of a child. Does she want another child to play with her toy? Typically, not. What about the teenager who begrudgingly spends his weekend with Grandma instead of with friends? Maybe you wait for others to donate to that ministry or missionary before you finally make a donation.

Yes, generosity isn't exactly in our DNA. But Jesus shows us a different way, the way of generosity. He left the comforts of heaven to live among us. He gave up privilege to become poor. The life He lived He lived to give generously. Jesus gave Himself to others, and so should we.

The gospel displays God's generosity towards us in Christ. How are we to respond to such generosity? By showing it to others! Whether it's giving more of your time, money, or possessions, God wants you to live generously.

Q: *Why doesn't generosity come naturally?*

Q: *What does it mean to live generously?*



LEARN

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE MACEDONIANS

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul highlighted the Macedonian churches' generous giving. Despite being poor and persecuted, they were overjoyed at the chance to give "beyond their means" and help their fellow believers. In fact, they begged Paul to let them contribute something. The example of the Macedonians was a motivation for the Corinthians to do likewise. Paul didn't demand a donation. But he did want the Corinthians to show the same kind of grace and generosity in their giving.

READ: Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. What set the Macedonians apart as an example to follow?

Q: Recall a time when someone showed generosity to you. What happened?

ALTHOUGH RICH, HE BECAME POOR

While the Macedonians gave generously when they were poor, Jesus gave when He was rich. He left His heavenly glory to become one of us. Why did He do this? In order to make us rich. It's through the gift of His life that we can enjoy the riches of our salvation.

In Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to give, he didn't put the pressure on anyone to give beyond what they had or could afford to give. He simply asked them to give what was fair to meet a need. In other words, he wasn't asking for an exchange of financial burdens. Rather, he called for an equal sharing of the burden.¹

Q: In what ways can remembering the generosity of Christ's giving Himself help you to be more generous?

Q: Give examples of how you can share (or have shared) one another's burdens.



LIVE

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

LESSONS ON GENEROSITY

What can we learn about generosity from Paul's message to the Corinthians? Let's look at three lessons that you can apply to your life:

1. You give of yourself, not just your money. The gospel is about what God has given you so that you can, in turn, give yourself to others.
2. You can give out of your poverty or wealth. Rich people can be stingy, and poor people can be greedy. The

size of your gift is less important than the heart you have when you give.

3. Giving is related to grace. God makes you generous by His grace working in you and through you. You didn't deserve salvation, and, yet, Christ died for you. Likewise, you are called to give of yourself as an act of generous grace.²

Q: *What do you need to give up in order to give yourself to others?*

Q: *Give examples of acts of generous grace that you can do in your daily life.*

LIVING TO GIVE

The example of the Macedonians can be lived out today. The same Holy Spirit that lived in them also lives in you. The Spirit's role is to point you to Jesus, who lived to give of Himself with every opportunity. He will guide you in truth and how to live to give. Your generosity tank might be low, but God can fill it with His grace. Ask Him to fill your tank and reveal areas where you can show generosity.

Q: *What's the level of your generosity tank? Where would you like God to fill it?*

Q: *How different would your church (or group) be if everyone lived to give?*



LEAD

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

TAKE THE CHALLENGE

Are you inspired to be more generous? Then take the challenge and live to give. There are countless ways you can do this. Dedicate 2018 to weekly tithing. Pay for someone's groceries. Maybe your giving is being more generous with your time. Help your friend move. Disciple a young person. Volunteer somewhere. You can also help advance God's kingdom in your community through the Making Room Commitment. Those inside and outside the church need to see your generosity in action. Will you take the challenge?

Q: *In what specific ways is God calling you to live to give?*

Q: *Think of one person who has a need you can meet right now. How will you help?*



PRAY

Thank God for His grace that makes you generous. Ask Him to grow you in generosity and to reveal specific ways He wants you to give of yourself to others.



FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read Luke 21:1–4. How does the widow’s gift relate to the generosity of the Macedonians?
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their lives.



COMMENTARY

WHO WERE THE MACEDONIANS? The Macedonians were a collection of churches in the region of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.³

KINGDOM GENEROSITY The Bible tells us that when we give generously, God multiplies His grace towards us (2 Corinthians 9:8). Living for God’s kingdom means that we live to reflect God’s generosity to others. Our hands shouldn’t be tight-fisted, holding on to our time, money, or possessions. No, they should be open and ready to give where there is a need. This is the kingdom way. “God’s kingdom is the place of abundance where every generous act overflows its original bounds and becomes part of the unbounded grace of God at work in the world.”⁴

A MATTER OF FAIRNESS “Christian giving, [Paul] insists, does not aim at an exchange of financial burdens but rather at an equal sharing of them and an equal supply of the necessities of life. The rich are not called on to give so lavishly that they become poor and the poor become rich. That would simply prolong inequality.”⁵

EQUAL SHARING In v.15, Paul uses God's provision of manna for the Israelites as an illustration of equal sharing (See Exod. 16:13–36). Whereas what the Israelites experienced in the wilderness was a miracle, the Corinthians were called to voluntarily provide for the needs of fellow believers.⁶

ENDNOTES:

1. Murray J. Harris, "2 Corinthians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans–Galatians (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III & Garland, David E., vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 501.
2. David E. Garland, 2 Corinthians, vol. 29, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 379.
3. See Acts 16:9–17:15; 18:5; 19:21–22, 29; 20:1–4; 27:2.
4. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *A Spirituality of Fundraising (Henri Nouwen Spirituality)* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2011), 25.
5. Murray J. Harris, "2 Corinthians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans–Galatians (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III & Garland, David E., vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 501.
6. Douglas J. Moo, "The Letters and Revelation," in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2372.