

TAKEAWAY:

The central theme is living with open hands—embracing generosity not out of guilt but gratitude, and leveraging your life for God's glory. Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians 9 reminds us that generosity flows from Christ's example of self-giving love (2 Cor. 8:9). We are blessed to be a blessing, and our giving is a participation in God's grace.

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

- Can you share a time when you were reluctant to give or share something but gave anyway, and seeing the result made you genuinely joyful afterwards?
- Think of someone you know who lives generously – what stands out about their life? How could you follow their pattern?

UNDERSTANDING:

Have a group member read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Genesis 12:2-3; Proverbs 11:24-25

- How did this sermon help you better understand these passages of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 is based on Christ's example of love to us (2 Corinthians 8:9). In what ways has your life benefited from Christ's gift to you? In what ways can others benefit from your (whether as a spouse, parent, employer, employee, etc.) grace and generosity to them?
- How have you seen God multiply generosity- in your life or others?
- Most Biblical scholars recognize Genesis 12:2-3 as exemplary of a Godly lifestyle. Where else do you see this pattern in the Bible? How do you see it in an everyday Christian's lifestyle?

APPLICATION:

- When you think of a life lived with "open hands," what is one area—beyond money—where you feel God is asking you to loosen your grip and trust Him more fully with your resources (time, talent, or even your reputation)?
- Does your generosity flow from gratitude or guilt? In what ways can you steer it towards giving out of gratitude?

GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material.

You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of generosity. Here are two "Going Deeper" discussion prompts that build upon the above provided questions without repeating them:

- **Generosity and the One Who Fears the Lord:** In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul quotes from Psalm 112 to show how the one who fears the Lord will live a life of grace-filled generosity.
 - Read Psalm 112
 - We don't normally think that being afraid of something or someone is a blessing. We dislike being afraid, and fear is not something that we think is a good thing. And so, we have to ask the question, "*What is this fear that the psalmist is talking about when he says, 'If you fear the LORD, you're living a blessed life?'*"
 - What is it about this kind of fear in this Psalm that makes it a good thing as opposed to other fears in your life that perhaps are not healthy?
 - The fear of the Lord is able to bear a harvest of good fruit in your life. What kind of godly fruit is described in Psalm 112?
 - What connection do you think the Psalmist is making between generosity and the man or woman who fears the Lord?
 - Where is there a gap between where you currently stand regarding living a life of generosity and where the God-fearing person is described in this psalm? Recognizing that there is a gap and that you are needy is the first step toward seeing God create real change in you. Pray right now and ask God to make you into the kind of person Psalm 112 describes, and expect (by the power of His Spirit) for him to change you as you fear him more and more each day.
- **Leveraging Power for Others, Walking in God's Strength and Not Yours:** The foundation for Paul's admonition to the Corinthians to give (2 Cor 9:6-11) draws directly on the example of the Macedonian's generosity in their impoverished state (2 Cor 8:1-4) as well as Christ's *kenosis* (self-emptying) – the latter of which is mentioned specifically in Phil 2:8 and implicitly in 2 Cor 8:9. In his self-emptying, Christ moved from a position of absolute power to one of complete dependence and servanthood. Gordon Fee: "The central motivation for this collection [2 Cor 8-9] is a theological one: the grace of God expressed in Christ's 'becoming poor' [2 Cor 8:9]. It is not merely an ethical appeal; it is the Incarnation and Crucifixion that are the models. Our giving is a participation in the self-giving of God."
 - Read 2 Cor 8:1-9; Phil 2:1-11.
 - In what specific area of your life do you hold influence or authority (over a schedule, a budget, employees, children, etc.)?
 - How can you deliberately leverage that influence/authority, following Christ's pattern, to elevate and empower others rather than use this authority towards your own self-interest, your own security, your own positional enhancement, etc?
 - Being blessed by God to be a blessing to others should foster within us a life of gratitude and humility before God and others and an ongoing dependence of God. In what ways might your abundance, your generosity, and your talents (used for the cause of Christ) either foster these traits or detract from them.
 - Read Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; John 13:12-15.
 - In *Basic Christian Leadership*, John Stott states, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.... This is the central tenet of Christ's revolution. He transformed the meaning of power from coercion to compassion, and from domination to discipleship. It is the model for all Christian leadership, where the greatest must be the humblest slave" (underline added).
 - How did Jesus consistently redefine leadership in terms of service and humility – even directly challenging conventional views of power?

- How might Jesus's example specifically apply to you whom God has called to glorify the LORD and leverage one's talents for the cause of Christ?

- **Quotes:**

- True riches: "It is possible to have gold and to be poor, and it is possible to be without gold and be rich. The measure of riches is not the extent of one's possessions, but the disposition of the soul" (John Chrysostom).
- Generosity defined: "Generosity is a voluntary habit by which a man is inclined to bestow upon others in a fitting manner what he has, seeking not his own profit but the good of his neighbor" (Thomas Aquinas).
- The fear of the LORD: "The fear of the Lord is the key to the whole of practical Christianity. Where it is absent, generosity, integrity, and righteousness cannot flourish" (J. I. Packer).
- Humility and Advantage: We are not to seek our own, but that which is another's (Phil 2:4). The test of Christian love is whether we are willing to humble ourselves and use our advantages to lift up our brethren" (John Calvin).
- Power & greatness: "Jesus redefined greatness not as having many people serve you, but as you serving many people.... Leadership in the kingdom is fundamentally about power under control and deployed for the good of others, not power used to control others" (Dallas Willard).
- Historical context: "In the Roman world, greatness was domination. Jesus utterly subverts this by saying the Son of Man came 'not to be served but to serve' and to give his life (Mark 10:45). This kenotic [self-emptying] act is the new paradigm of true authority" (N. T. Wright).

PRAYER:

Thank God for His generosity. Pray that your group would be marked by open-handed living and Kingdom-minded giving.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE:

Choose one tangible way this week to bless someone--financially, with time, or through service. Be prepared to share your story in your next Life Group gathering.