

Icebreaker: What was the most memorable gift you ever received? Why was it memorable?

Lectio Divina (read; meditate; pray; contemplate): Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 and/or 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 aloud and have your group share what stands out to each of them in the passage(s).

Discuss:

1. Paul describes in 8:2 that for some churches “abundant joy” and “extreme poverty” “overflowed together in a wealth of generosity.” How would you describe “abundant joy?” How would you describe “extreme poverty?” How can those two go together?
2. Looking at 8:2 again, Paul says that suffering developed into a wealth of generosity. Have you experienced that? How does God’s grace (8:1) help us to develop this wealth of generosity?
3. Giving generously mirrors what God has already done for us. Some churches (2 Corinthians 8:3) gave as much as they could, “even beyond their means.” How could giving, even when it is beyond our means, shape us and mirror what God has done for us?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 and see where Paul says there might be “equality” in giving and receiving in Christian community. Has there been a time you gave and received equally in return? What was that like?
5. What present circumstances in your life provide opportunities to give away your resources for God’s purposes? What are some barriers that might stop you from being aware of giving opportunities?
6. What are some ways we can talk about giving or demonstrate giving that would help to shape our covenant children or our own children and grandchildren?
7. On a scale of 1 (out of obedience) to 10 (out of joy), how would you rate your attitude toward giving and generosity? Why did you give yourself that rating?

Prayer:

Share your prayer requests with one another and also remember those from our church family:

- > Prayers of healing for Sue Armstrong and Robie Strickland.
- > Prayers for the team members and guests of the Men’s Great Banquet taking place in our building this weekend and for the upcoming Women’s Great Banquet (March 16-19).

Reminders for your group:

> Join in ZPC’s Lenten reading of the gospels. Schedules available at the Welcome Center and at zpc.org.

Leader’s notes:

God’s great grace should move us to give generously out of joy and gratitude. It is a privilege to participate with God in God’s work. And yet with paying our bills, our mortgages, and other responsibilities, we can feel pressure to give out of what’s left over. The Apostle Paul helps to explain giving out of poverty and with joy. May we use these words of Paul and our discussions to encourage each other to live generously.

[Question 1] As you ask and answer the first four questions, it will be important to refer back to Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 8, especially the first 3 verses. Abundant joy might be overflowing delight or jubilation. Extreme poverty might be impoverishment or destitution. Poverty, whether in resources or in other areas, can lead to a dependence on God. Dependence on God can lead to seeing God at work. Seeing God at work and God providing can lead to joy and generosity.

[Question 2] When we are poor in spirit or in need of money to pay obligations we often reach out to God in desperation and need. God’s grace is sufficient for all our needs. Realizing God’s grace and how God cares for us can be moving – so that we want to be generous because God has been generous to us.

[Question 3] God gave us the world, provides for our needs, and even gave His Son to live and die that we might have life. When we are aware of all that God has given us – we are inspired. Through that inspiration, we can desire to give, maybe even more than we should. In giving so much we can mirror how God has given to us.

[Question 4] Paul says there are times when our plenty shall supply what someone else needs, and other times when their plenty shall supply our needs – in equality. Other times, we are blessed as much as we give. When we give with the right motives we are excited and joyful to give. Then it feels equally good to give as it is to receive.

[Question 5] Are there places right now where you (or your group) see opportunities to give for God. Do the circumstances around you show places to give? On the other hand, are there obstacles to giving? Some might be a lack of funds right now, or some attitude or relationship that is impeding your desire to give. Others feel pressure to save more for college, retirement, or obligations that they have to pay. How can you remove some obstacles to giving?

[Question 6] At church, we can show our children that we are giving each Sunday as we put our offering in the plate. We might point to ministries in the church (local missions or events) where we have given to the church budget so that those things can occur. We can also give to tangible needs around us when our children are with us to see it – maybe to local community needs or inner city ministries where we actually deliver the money or the gift to the agency in need. Through ZPC, your group could consider giving to the Food Pantry, Shepherd, Str8up or IHN. Check zpc.org for opportunities to give or serve.

[Question 7] If your group knows each other well, this could be a chance for a very open discussion about why we give. If they are still getting to know each other, this could be a chance to open up a little more personally and share about our views on giving. Encourage appropriate transparency in your group.