

2 Corinthians 8:8-9—Invest #2

October 8, 2017

You will nearly go as far as your questions take you. If you are a good question asker and a bad jumping to conclusions person, you will go far. Far.

The right question has power. It

- Unlocks mysteries
- Discloses motives
- Starts thinking
- Change everything

Voltaire said, “Judge a man by his questions, not his answers.” I’m not a fan of judging anyone but I get what he means. The right question is important.

As we talk about money & generosity we need to ask the right questions or we will lose our way.

We want to ask the right questions. We are in the midst of asking a series of questions about money and generosity like we do each year about this time.

Last week, we asked the question: “How does a disciple view money?” And we answered the question this way: Because everything we have and all that we are comes directly from God—ALL our money is God’s on loan to us.

We own nothing, We have nothing on our own, We earn nothing on our own; God owns all, God has all; God gives all things.

This week, we are going to ask a different question, instead of: “How does a disciple view money—the question is: “WHY does a disciple GIVE money?”

We talk about giving each year because it is easy to forget why we give. If you don’t understand the why you will never give. And maybe you don’t know why.

So, today we talk about: “Why does a disciple GIVE money?” We will do what we do each week we are going to ask our questions of the Bible—and today we ask it of 2 Corinthians 8:1-9—

“We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, [2] 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. [3] For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, [4] begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—[5] and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. [6] Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. [7] 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.

[8] I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. [9] 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.” 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

PRAY

“Why does a disciple GIVE money?”

PROP: Disciples give because of what they have received.

Our section treats us to two examples this morning—and we will look at them each in turn.

Example#1: The Impoverished Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:1-7)

Example#2: The Impoverished Savior (2 Cor. 8:8-9)

1. The Impoverished Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:1-7)

“We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, [2] 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.”

If you are familiar with the NT, you are familiar with this section of scripture.

But do you know the background?

The Corinthian church had pledged to take up a collection to help saints in need at Jerusalem. There were other poor people in other churches, but they were indebted to the Jerusalem saints uniquely.

Why?

Because Christianity was born in Jerusalem at that church. The Jerusalem church is quite literally the mother church of all churches from that point forward. We can all trace our lineage to Jerusalem.

And by the time Paul is writing, the church is becoming more and more Gentile. And the Gentiles were keenly aware of how much they owed to their Jewish brethren.

The Gentile churches literally owed everything to these Jewish Christians.

The Christians in Jerusalem needed help. It was probably from a combination of things.

About 20 Years before, at the Pentecost that you have read about in Acts 2, everything changed.

Tens of thousands of Jews had trekked to Jerusalem from all over the Roman world. They heard a great tumult. They heard God's name praised in their native tongues. They heard Peter preach and in that they heard the voice of God.

3000 people heard the call of God that day and were converted. That day the church was born.

Many of those people did not go home.

They sold or walked away from family land. When that money ran out, they didn't have land or livestock to live on. And then a famine hit Jerusalem.

And Christians in the ‘first church’ were hungry. When Paul visited Jerusalem the leaders of the church there asked that he solicit funds from the Gentile churches.

And the Gentile churches lined up to help—and the Corinthian church was at the head of the line saying, “We can help. We can do it. We will give a hand.”

Time went by. Good intentions morphed into inaction.

And they did nothing.

Corinth was one of the wealthiest cities in the known world. We are talking Dubai/Tokyo/NY NOT Addis Ababa, Ethiopia/Port au Prince, Haiti.

But the churches in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea...) which WERE much more like Africa or Haiti gave generously. They gave out of their poverty and not their wealth.

The Macedonians were just as impoverished as those in Jerusalem. But they were eager to give.

They responded to their extreme poverty and affliction (both) NOT with bitterness, anger, self-pity but with generosity. They begged to give when they could have been begging for money.

They could have said—what about us?

Instead they said—we want to give too!

How can poor people be generous? They were generous with what they had, and though it was probably not very much—they were gave. Not the amount but the heart.

They weren't being foolish—they probably decided what they could give and took a small step beyond that. I think it is easy to excuse yourself in this passage because you might think—it sounds like they gave all they had.

I'm not going to do that. So you don't give.

Instead, the idea is—if they gave from their poverty to bless someone else—maybe I should too. Who cares about what I have—I want to help!!

The Corinthians had much, much more. And they had promised to help but didn't follow through.

I want you to notice how they gave:

Vs. 5,

“and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”

They gave themselves first to the Lord. That is not a throwaway line. But the order is significant.

At conversion—the Christian gives herself to the Lord completely. And as we live this life we recognize that we have to fight to continually give ourselves to the Lord. We drift. We wander. We get lost. We forget.

And so part of being a Christian is fighting to give all of ourselves to the Lord and his purposes. Even our money. We have to press down and out selfishness, pride, anxiety, fear and push everything out and out of the way as we give ourselves to him.

As they gave themselves to the Lord, it was the Lord that moved on them to give up to and beyond their means. That is something only the Lord would/could ask. No person has the authority to ask someone to give like that.

That is God at work. He worked that way in the Macedonians.

While I cannot say what you should give—I can unblinkingly say how you are to give.

How? Generously. Sacrificially.

To those in need.

To those in your church.

To your church.

Please understand that the Macedonians did not give irresponsibly. They still had money to ensure that their basic needs were met. If you don't have money to eat and can't pay rent—save your money.

But I wonder if that is the situation that most of us find ourselves in.

Food, shelter, clothing, transportation, communications and utilities are needs in our day and age. But are we apt to define some wants as needs?

I know I do.

I'm not going to list those things out but a need is something you can live without a need is something that without you will be in danger.

I'm not saying to be reckless in your giving. I am saying Give yourself to the Lord and ask—am I generous? Do you ever give sacrificially?

Tiff and I had to save for years to buy our first house. Years. And because we had a goal to buy a house, it was easier to say no to:

- Cars
- Clothes
- Eating out
- Travel

We sacrificed to get something we wanted.

The question for all of us is this: Have you ever sacrificed for others?

When you give here—100% of the funds go to minister to gospel ministry. Pastors and staff all work to and for you and we do all we can to serve. And we know that your money makes that possible. We don't take that for granted.

Have you given yourself to the Lord when it comes to money? Or have you given yourself to—

Apple?

Chevy?
Honda?
Nike?
Coach?

The last thing a church could or should do is evaluate what her members buy. We have no right to have opinions on vehicles, houses, clothes, electronics—I don't know your heart. Only two people know who you give yourself to—you and the Lord.

How are we to give?
After we give ourselves to the Lord.
How else are we to give?

It is captured in a little word to notice in this first bit as he talks about the Macedonian churches a word that we love but rarely apply to giving. Grace.

Vs. 1: **We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia**

Vs. 6: **Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.**

Vs. 7: **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.**

If you have been a Christian for a few years or so, you probably (like me) think of grace as something like unmerited favor.

The word carries the whiff of a different sense here in chapter 8.

“...see that you excel in this act of grace also.” Does not mean you receive unmerited favor when you give.

It means we give because of what has been given to us.

Grace is attractive. Another way to think about grace is beauty in action. That is what Paul is talking about here. When you give generously you put grace into motion.

Whenever you give your hard-earned money you are putting grace into action. You are spreading something of the praiseworthiness and beauty of Christ around.

Why does a disciple give money? The first part of the answer is: Because a disciple gives himself to God and then gives.

But there is another part.

2. The Impoverished Savior (2 Cor. 8:8-9)

Why?

The reason might surprise you. Think of all the reasons that Paul could give—he could say:

- I'm the apostle to the Gentiles, do what I say.
- I'm writing scripture, give.
- Trotted out OT passages.
- Pulled on their heartstrings describing the need.

Instead he gives the fundamental reason a disciple should give generously. Because of the savior's willing impoverishment.

Look at verse 9,

“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.”

Note that he is talking to Christians. This appeal only works if you are a Christian. Look at the beginning of verse 9.

‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...’

If you are a Christian you know the grace of Jesus Christ.
You have been given love you did not earn.
You have been given favor you did not earn.
You have been given kindness you did not earn.
You have been given blessings you did not earn.
You have been given support you did not earn.

In other words: Jesus gave you grace.

You know that at one time you did not know him or care about him or think about him. But then, somehow you met him—

Maybe you realized you had problems. You came to the end of yourself. You were cut by sin and grief. And you felt as if the whole world was stacked against you. You looked around and could not find a way out. No amount of church

going, good deeds or happy thoughts did anything to help you out.

And then you heard about Jesus. It was beauty in such an unlikely place. A man you had never met loved you unlike anyone you had ever met. He loved you up to and past the point of death.

The sacrifice was complete, the victory won, all you had to do was turn to him. And you did. You did and though you look like the same person and still struggle you are different.

Why? Because you know his grace.

But have you thought HOW you received that way out?

‘that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.’

Though he was rich—

Jesus was opulently appointed with a currency that we have never held in our hands and can barely imagine. He was prosperous with all power, honor and glory.

Power—

He had the power to create at his very word. He spoke and things happened. He didn't have to speak to servants to get them to do something. He spoke and creation exploded to life. His means of making everything was by his speech. He held all creation together with the strength of his power.

He was unsurpassed in his power. There was NOTHING he could not do.

He was rich in power.

Honor—There were special creatures that have it as their sole purpose to give honor to Jesus Christ. They were created to sing his praises. And none of it is flattery. It is as if once creation came into being there HAD to be creatures that honored him otherwise all of creation would strain at the silence. Day and night creatures sang his praises.

He was rich in honor.

Glory—He was radiant in glory. Resplendent. He was always the weightiest thing in the universe. When he entered a room, everyone looked. All eyes were constantly focused on him. And the ultimate expression of his glory was that he with the Father and the Spirit in idyllic harmony. Together they had complete satisfaction and perfect fellowship for countless ages.

He had all glory—he was rich in glory.

‘that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.’

Had had ALL power, honor, glory—then he became poor.

For your sake, he became poor—

This has nothing to do with his economic status when he came to earth. It is that he came to earth. He impoverished himself. Completely. There is no analogy that tells the

story. All I can say is this—if you were with God—you would not leave. Not under any circumstances.

Why? For our sake.

Poor in—Power

Yes, he could still perform miracles, but compared to equality with God that was weak sauce. He was in one place at a time now. He did not have the power to walk when he was born. The one who held up the stars was had to be held by his mother.

The one who spoke all things into being had to learn how to talk. The one who knew all things had to be taught to write. The one who held all things together by the word of his power had to learn to hold together and not cry when he fell down.

He was poor in power for our sake.

Poor in— Honor.

He was not treated as special. He had religious people sneer at him and look down on him. He had people turn their backs on him. He heard threats. He was rejected. For all the people that followed him there some that turned away. He was distrusted by the officials and used by the common man. So many just wanted a miracle that he was hounded with out let up.

He was poor in honor for our sake.

He was poor in—Glory

He was nothing to look at. He disguised his shining glory under the flesh of a common man. If I had a picture of Jesus and his 12 followers he would be so common looking that you would not be able to pick him out. There were no angels worshiping him. His followers didn't even know who he was for most of his ministry.

He was poor in glory for our sake.

And he became poorest as he died like a slave. How far he had fallen! The one with power, honor and glory was stripped of all three as he was made a spectacle for all to see. He had the power to come down off the cross but used even greater power to stay up there. He had the power to bear our curse and die. He didn't have honor. Is it honorable to die without any clothes in front of a crowd? there was no dignity, no honor only shame. Unspeakable shame.

And there was no glory in dying like a slave. What glory would there be in being strung up like a thief? It was grievous.

But he had a reason for his biting poverty.

'that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.'

So that we might be rich—

He gave up everything so that you and I might have everything. He gave up all so that we could have it all. He lives to enrich us.

We must not forget that we have what we have because he became poor to make us rich—

Power: Jesus has made us rich in power.

Without him we can do nothing. But with him nothing is impossible. He empowers us to what we could never do before. We want to be different and please God.

That takes new life. If you don't want to change and be different there is no power in the universe that can change you—but Jesus did. He empowers new affections.

He has made us rich with power.

Honor: We are rich in honor.

“If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.” John 12:26

As Christians—disciples—as we follow him, God himself will honor us. One day Christians will hear—‘Well done Good and faithful servant.’

We will be honored because Christ made himself poor for our sakes.

Glory: We are rich in Glory

“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” Romans 8:30

Because we will one day be like Jesus we will reflect his glory. We even do that today. Because he is glorified, we will one day be glorified. We will put on new bodies that cannot die or decay. That cannot but perfectly reflect the glory of Jesus Christ.

We are glorified because he made himself poor.

When it comes to giving—the scriptures only direct us to impoverish ourselves a little to bless and help others. There are many people that sacrificed greatly to buy this land and put up this building.

Many are here.

Some have passed away.

Some have moved on.

Some have moved away.

Some were sent away (church plants).

But all sacrificed to build this so that people they didn't know could get to know Jesus or get to know him better. That is why we have Invest each year.

We are planning a combination of things to update improve and update the building. If you have seen the classroom and conference room out front and the infant care room—more of that.

We are shooting for 150k.

And zero percent will be just to make our lives easier. 100% will be for to make this place a place people can feel comfortable and hear the gospel. We will also fully fund Rancho 3M and Haiti.

But I'm asking you to consider giving not so much because of the improvements but to think about others. There are people you don't know who helped build this place—you can be one of those who can improve this place for people you have haven't met yet.

We can be generous to others because of what he has given us.

Jesus gave himself so that we might be enriched. With no thought of himself, he died for those who only thought about themselves. He died not for the good but the evil. He did not come for the deserving but for the only kind of person there is—undeserving.

This is the reason disciples give money—he made himself poor—we can impoverish ourselves just a little bit.

(3) Groups this morning—s

Not a Christian: We do not want your money. A part of me wants to apologize for you having to sit through a sermon on money. But another part of me want you to see how thoroughly Jesus has changed us. We would never consider giving away cash for others without knowing what he gave us.

Don't give, but instead see what this Jesus has done for you.

Those who don't give regularly: I know how hard, scary, threatening and irresponsible it can feel to be generous. Can I encourage you a bit? Before you start giving, give

yourself to the Lord and ask: Am I honoring God with my money?

And then think about what he has given you.

Every sin forgiven
Declared Righteous
Promised inheritance
Jesus with you
Loves you eternally and back again.

Don't give to Invest, just give regularly.

Those that give regularly: I don't know who you are, but I am grateful. Thank you, thank you for trusting Jesus tangibly. Please pray about how you want to participate. 150k sounds like a lot but it is doable.

About one trip to In-n-out for my family a month. I can do that.

The sacrifice we focus on is not like the Macedonians. We give not out of affliction and poverty but out of gratefulness and love for our savior.

Why does a disciple give?

Because a disciple is keenly aware of all that Jesus has given them.

