

Global Economic Justice

August 12 • Bible Study Guide 11

Bible Background • 2 Corinthians 8, 9

Printed Text • [2 Corinthians 8:7–15](#) | Devotional Reading • [Proverbs 3:9–10](#), [13–20](#), [27–28](#)

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: IDENTIFY ways of living generous lives in Christ; FEEL greater compassion for the poor and oppressed; and DECIDE to practice equity and justice toward other people.

In Focus

Vanessa came home with her arms full of shopping bags. She had always loved to wear the latest fashions. After getting a raise this year, she decided it was time to splurge. Soon she found herself on the couch being exhausted from a day at the mall. As she was going through the clothes that she bought and plotting when and on what occasion she would wear her new outfits, the phone rang. It was one of the church members, Sister Rosie.

Sister Rosie reminded Vanessa about the fundraising they were doing for Haiti and that all the money would be due on this coming Sunday. As Sister Rosie described the conditions the people were living in, Vanessa felt convicted. How could she buy more clothes that she didn't even need when so much of the world was in serious poverty?

Soon Vanessa was on the road to the mall. She packed her car up with all of the outfits that she bought and returned every last one of them. She had enough. There was no reason for her to buy more things that she didn't need. Now she was going to do something to help those who were barely making it.

Many people around the world and in our own local communities are struggling to meet their daily needs. God is challenging the church to do something about it. Have you ever taken part in an activity to help those in other countries who are suffering?

Keep in Mind

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” ([2 Corinthians 8:9](#)).

Words You Should Know

A. Poor ([2 Corinthians 8:9](#)) *ptocheuo* (Gk.)—To be destitute financially or spiritually.

B. Rich (v. 9) *plouteo* (Gk.)—To be prosperous financially or spiritually.

Say It Correctly

Diligence. **DIH**-li-jins.

Expedient. eks-**PEE**-dee-int.

KJV

2 Corinthians 8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

NLT

2 Corinthians 8:7 Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.

8 I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches.

9 You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.

10 Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it.

11 Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have.

12 Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have.

13 Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality.

14 Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal.

15 As the Scriptures say, "Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough."

The People, Places, and Times

The Jerusalem Church. Jerusalem is considered the political and religious capital for the Jewish people.

During the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter preached and 3,000 people were saved. Day by day, the Lord increased the number of believers. The believers in Jerusalem developed into the first church (Acts 2).

Macedonia. This was a province located between the north of Greece and the highlands of the Balkans.

Macedonia enters into the biblical scene as Paul saw a vision of a man from Macedonia (Acts 16:9). Eventually he and Silas traveled to Philippi, which is on the eastern coast of Macedonia. This was the first city in Europe where the Gospel was preached and a local church was formed.

What do you believe about giving to foreign missions?

Background

After Paul's conversion, he visited Jerusalem on many occasions. At one time, he met with the leaders of the Jerusalem Council to get their approval of his preaching to the Gentiles (Galatians 2). Barnabas and Titus were also present during this visit. The leaders gave their approval and requested that Paul remember the poor. The Jerusalem church was suffering from a serious food shortage due to a drought in Palestine (Acts 11:28–30). Many of the other Gentile churches were financially stable and prospering. During Paul's missionary journeys, he took collections for the poor in Jerusalem.

Paul, who had written this letter from Macedonia, was appealing to the Corinthians to participate in collecting for the poor in Jerusalem. This letter tried to build on the success of an earlier harsh letter which has been lost. It led to forgiveness and reconciliation among the believers in Corinth. He was building upon the foundation that they had realigned themselves with him and obeyed his commands (2 Corinthians 2:9). Since they had been obedient to his directions before, Paul wanted the Corinthians to continue in their allegiance to him. His goal was their full participation in the collection for the saints in Jerusalem.

What is your reason for giving or not giving to causes of economic injustice?

At-A-Glance

1. Give as You Promised (2 Corinthians 8:7–8)
2. Give in Response to God's Grace (v. 9)
3. Give According to Your Ability (vv. 10–15)

In Depth

1. Give as You Promised (2 Corinthians 8:7–8)

Titus, who was Paul's representative, had previously encouraged the Corinthians to give toward the collection for the poor. But in light of their recent conflict with Paul, they had lost their zeal for collections (7:2–15). When affliction abounds in our lives, we should still be committed to God and ministering to others. The Macedonians were rejoicing in the midst of their troubles. Paul was encouraging the Corinthians to do the same. He told Titus to complete the gathering of collections from the Macedonians. Paul wanted them to prove their allegiance to him and their love for others.

The Corinthian believers excelled in many things. They had strong faith, knowledge, enthusiasm, and love. Paul appealed to them to have the same passion and commitment for the collections. For him, the offering is a remembering of the poor (Galatians 2:10), a collection of money (1 Corinthians 16:1–2), a ministry (Romans 15:25), and a gift (2 Corinthians 8:6). He was not commanding them to give, but urging them to prove that their love was sincere. This is a challenge to us as well. There are many needs locally and globally. It is up to us to do our part to eliminate economic injustice much like the Corinthian church. Our finances show where our devotion and affection are focused.

Is it possible to eliminate economic injustice? Why or why not?

2. Give in Response to God's Grace (v. 9)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest example for all believers to follow. Jesus gave up His position and became a human (Philippians 2:6–7). He was born in poor circumstances, lived a poor life, and died in poverty—all so that He could bestow His favor upon us. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the richness of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7). Jesus is our model, not the American dream. We must follow Him in giving to those who need it most.

How can we follow in Jesus' footsteps by becoming poor in order to make others rich?

3. Give According to Your Ability (vv. 10–15)

Paul urged the Corinthians to complete the collections for the poor that they had planned a year earlier (2 Corinthians 9:2). The gifts offered should be in proportion to what they are able to give. God does not want us to be burdened by giving that which we cannot sacrifice. Whatever we give, we should do it willingly, “for God

loveth a cheerful giver” (from **2 Corinthians 9:7**).

When you have given to others, it is an act of justice. In speaking of the balance that comes from a culture of generosity, Paul could be reflecting on the charity of the early Jerusalem church. The believers shared voluntarily in Jerusalem (**Acts 4:32–37**). Everyone shared possessions equally so no one lacked anything. Believers should willingly share with others. The collection symbolizes for Paul a unified people of God, in whom there is no Jew or Gentile (**Galatians 3:28**). We are of one body in Christ. If we are of one body, it is an injustice to see the needs of this world and refuse to offer assistance.

How can you practice and display an attitude of cheerful giving?

Search the Scriptures

1. How did Jesus become poor “so that by His poverty he could make you rich” (**2 Corinthians 8:9**)?
2. Why did Jesus say that giving should not be “that other men be eased, and ye burdened” (v. 13)?

Discuss the Meaning

Around the globe, there are many different needs, as well as in some of our own cities. In your opinion, should we attend to local needs first and then global needs? Why or why not?

Lesson in Our Society

In today’s society, some people give out of a sense of obligation. Their motivation is to strictly adhere to the law as commanded in the Word and by the pastor. However, God wants us to give liberally, not under compulsion, but as an acknowledgment of His love and favor.

Others give out of selfish reasons. They give just to get something in return. However, our focus in giving to others should be remembering all God has given to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus gave His life for us so we should give generously to others.

If you live in America, you live in one of the wealthiest nations on Earth when it comes to wealth; billions of people live on less than two dollars a day. This wealth wasn’t given so we could spend it on luxuries and comforts, but so we could be a blessing to others.

Giving is not limited to financial gifts. We can also share our time and skills. We can volunteer at homeless shelters, schools, hospitals, and prisons. Every day we have opportunities to give to others. We should give, within our ability, as the occasion allows.

How does it feel to know that you live in one of the wealthiest nations on Earth?

Make It Happen

- Go to the globalrichlist.com website and discover where you stand in regards to the wealthy of the world.
- Write in a journal about how you feel about being considered one of the wealthiest people in the world by virtue of living in the United States.
- Create a plan for giving to someone in need. Determine how much and how often you will give (beyond tithing to your local church).

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

2 Corinthians 8:7–15

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

Many of the Greek words used here provide insight into Paul's full meaning. The Greek word for "abound" is *perisseuo* (**peh-reese-SYOO-oh**), which means to excel, to have enough plus leftovers. The word for "utterance" is *logos* (Gk. **LOG-os**), which can also be translated as "word," referring to either the Corinthians' own speaking prowess or to the Word of God. *Spoude* (**spoo-DAY**) is the Greek word for "diligence"; it means earnestness, putting one's whole heart into a task. Paul says that the Corinthians have excelled in their faith, speech, knowledge of the Word, earnestness to follow Christ, and love for Paul and Titus. However, Paul wanted to make sure that they excelled at the grace of their giving as well.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. 9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Paul assures the Corinthians that he is not making a decree that they must give more, but he wanted them to have the chance to prove the sincerity of their love. Paul also reminds the Corinthians of Christ's unselfishness in order to encourage them to remain unselfish as well. Paul says the Corinthians "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Greek word for "know" is *ginosko* (**ghin-OCE-ko**), which connotes being sure of something by having experienced it personally. The word for "grace" in Greek is *charis* (**KHAR-ecce**), which can be translated as "favor." The Corinthians, and every Christian, have a personal knowledge that Christ did the ultimate favor for us, by leaving His throne in heaven as King of kings and coming down to earth in the form of a child. Despite His eternal royalty, Christ came to earth as a baby born in a manger, who grew up having to work as a carpenter. Ultimately, Christ made the ultimate sacrifice by allowing Himself to be crucified on the Cross, to accomplish salvation for all who are in Him. Christ's poverty made us rich in grace and mercy.

10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. 11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

Paul gives the Corinthians his advice on what to do with their giving. The word for "be forward" in Greek is *thelo* (**THEL-oh**), which means determined or willed. Paul wants them not only to continue to give, but he also wants the Corinthians to continue to be determined, just as they were a year ago. The Greek word for "perform" is *epiteleo* (**ep-ee-tel-EH-oh**), which means to bring to a finish. Paul challenged the Corinthians to finish their giving. He said that just as they had a readiness and determination to give before (the word for "will" is the same word used for "be forward" in the previous verse), the Corinthians should be determined to finish their giving according to what they have to give.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that they can only give what they have. He emphasizes the importance of the right attitude in giving. The Greek word for "willing mind" is similar to the word for "readiness" in verse 11. *Prothumia* (**pro-thoo-MEE-ah**) is the Greek word used in this verse, and it can be translated as "forwardness of mind" or "readiness of mind." This text has a definite theme of willingness to give. The word for "accepted" in Greek is *euprosdektos* (**ew-PROS-dek-tos**), which means well-received. Paul suggested that the proper attitude in giving is more important than the amount given. He says that the gift is well-received according to what the Corinthians are able to give, not what they cannot give.

13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: 14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality.

Paul does not want to put the entire burden on the Corinthians to do all of the giving to the ministry. He also

doesn't want them to give so much that they suffer from not having enough for themselves. Paul knows that others need to give as well, but he believed giving needs equality. The Greek word for "want" is *husterema* (**hoos-TEH-ray-mah**), which means lack or need. Paul says that the Corinthians should be able to meet others' needs now, so that in the future, if the Corinthians are ever in need, others can be a help to them. Since Christians shared supplies in tough times, this is entirely possible.

15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

Paul quotes **Exodus 16:18** in this verse. The Greek word for "no lack" is *elattoneo* (**eh-lat-toe-NEH-oh**), which is also translated as "fall short." Since everyone was working together and all that was gathered was put together, those who gathered a lot did not have too much, and those who could only gather a little did not fall short in supplies. This principle only worked if the children of God remained unselfish. The unselfishness of others is what helped the Christian church maintain the support it needed. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to not only continue giving, but also to give with the right attitude and perspective.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

God Provides Food to the People
([Exodus 16:13–17](#))

TUESDAY

The Widow's Generosity
([Mark 12:38–44](#))

WEDNESDAY

Generous Self-Giving of Jesus
([Philippians 2:5–11](#))

THURSDAY

Excel in Generosity
([2 Corinthians 8:1–6](#))

FRIDAY

Generosity Results in Mutual Thanksgiving
([2 Corinthians 9:11–15](#))

SATURDAY

Support the Ministry of Church Leaders
([2 Corinthians 8:16–24](#))

SUNDAY

Balance Need and Abundance Fairly
([2 Corinthians 8:7–15](#))