

Teaching Plan EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: May 20, 2018

Lesson Title: "Giving Faithfully"

Lesson Passage: 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Having introduced the subject of the offering for the needy saints of Palestine in chapter 8, Paul carries the matter further by suggesting some important reasons for generous giving, reasons that are as relevant to Christians today as they were to the Corinthians.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Identify the reasons Paul gives for generosity in Christian giving. (2) Use these ideas to formulate a rationale for generous stewardship in today's church.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

William Barclay made a significant observation about the Apostle Paul: "It is most interesting to note that this same Paul, who could write like a lyric poet and think like a theologian could, when it was necessary, act with the meticulous accuracy of a chartered accountant." *Observe that we will see evidence of the truth of Barclay's words at the beginning of this lesson.*

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Note that Paul's theological reasoning in his appeal for funds begins at 9:6, but suggest that some intriguing evidence of his shrewd practical thinking appears in 2 Cor. 8:16 to 9:5. As class members open their Bibles to this passage, share these thoughts:*

First, Paul shows impressive common sense in protecting himself from potential charges by his critics. He knows that he could be open to the charge that he is lining his own pockets with part of the sizable offering for the saints in Jerusalem. So, he makes arrangements for two other brothers in Christ to accompany him on his trip to Jerusalem, thereby making it impossible for his opponents to claim that he has misappropriated funds (*refer to 2 Cor. 8:18-20*). *Note, too, that the churches (not Paul himself) have chosen one of the men who is to carry out this duty.*

Second, perhaps it would not be too irreverent to point out that Paul had a good grasp of the psychology of fund-raising. One evidence of this is that he first inspires the Macedonian churches with the example of the Corinthian church, when appealing for contributions for the collection (9:2); then he uses the generosity of the Macedonians as an example to the Corinthians (8:1-5). *To demonstrate this further, let someone read 9:1-5 from a modern version (the TEV, for example).*

2. *Ask class members to scan 2 Cor. 9:6-15. If possible, encourage them to discuss the passage with the persons sitting next to them. Ask them to identify some reasons for generous giving presented in this passage. After allowing time for class members to examine the passage, give them an opportunity to share what they have found. SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS: (1) The blessing that comes from giving is proportionate to the giving; if you sow sparingly, you will reap sparingly; but generous sowing produces a generous harvest of spiritual blessings (v. 6). (2) Giving cheerfully pleases God (v. 7). (3) God will bless the generous Christian with resources for be-*

ing generous, and also provide enough for his own needs (v. 8). *Note the word "sufficiency" in the KJV means simply "enough."* This is not a promise of "superabundance," but merely "enough." Just as God provides seed for the sower, He will go on supplying "seed" for generous giving (vv. 8-9). (4) Generous Christian giving will bring about a great harvest of "thanksgiving to God" (vv. 11-12). That is to say, generosity is a testimony to the power of the gospel (vv. 13-14).

3. *Read 2 Cor. 9:15. Point out that this is the Christian's supreme reason for generous giving. Comment:* So great is the gift of the grace of God, it defies description. Only the most shriveled-up stinginess can continue to be tight-fisted in view of what God has done for us. To illustrate the point, call attention to the "Parable of the Unmerciful Servant" in Mt. 18:23-35. The theme of this parable is forgiveness; but it also illustrates a situation in which a servant fails to match his master's generosity. As such, perhaps it could be called "The Parable of the Stingy Christian."

4. *Ask class members to help summarize all the reasons for practicing generous giving that appear in the lesson passage. Compile a list on the board. Invite class members to share other ideas.* (For example, one Christian said, "In a world permeated with materialism, I tithe to prove to myself that I haven't completely surrendered to mammon.")

CLOSING THE LESSON

Tell this story: During the Baptist 75 Million Campaign in 1919, a poor widow who lived on a small hillside farm 11 miles from Asheville, NC., prayed earnestly that the Lord would let her take part in that effort. This woman, who was supporting a widowed daughter and three grandchildren, had only 30 cents to her name. As she prayed, she became convinced that she should give her 30 cents to the campaign. Her sole workhorse was ailing, so she decided to walk the entire distance of 22 miles into town and back. Her only protection from the rain was an old faded shawl. The church treasurer was so touched by what she had done that he quadrupled his own pledge. On the next Wednesday night, when he shared the story with the church, many others increased the amounts of their gifts. Eventually, news of this sacrificial gift reached the denomination at large, and several millions of additional money were pledged to the 75 Million Campaign as a result of this woman's example.

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