

The Churches of
Macedonia Are Giving

2 Corinthians 8:1-7

MEMORY VERSE

2 CORINTHIANS 8:7

But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us--see that you abound in this grace also.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Paper, glue sticks, and a mixture of salt and food coloring.

Paper, crayons, and a stapler.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Pictures

Have the children draw a happy face on a piece of paper with a glue stick. Sprinkle over the glue a mixture of salt and a drop of food coloring (the children can mix them together).

Explain to your class that even though the people in our story experienced deep poverty, they also had deep joy through the Lord. That may not be the world's recipe for happiness, but it is real in Christ. Explain that the salt is bitter, but the smile is joyful.

LESSON TIME!

Today's lesson is about the blessing of giving to others. We are going to learn about a group of people called the Macedonians. They gave from their heart and despite the rough trials that they were in. God wants us to be "cheerful" givers and be willing to give of our resources when we see others in need. In fact, God has blessed us with everything we have, so doesn't it make sense that we should be willing to give in order to help others.

Let's take a look at the lessons we can learn this week from the Macedonians. **God blesses those who give according to and beyond their ability.**

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-2

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:

that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.

Paul starts this portion of scripture by telling what God, in His grace, has done for the churches of Macedonia. He wanted them to be encouraged because they had been going through much trouble and hard times. But they had mixed their joy with their poverty resulting in an overflow of giving to others.

The Macedonians had reason to be sorrowful because of the severe trials they were in, but they chose to rejoice. Even though they were in extreme poverty, they made others rich through their giving. Though they had nothing, they possessed everything that really matters. They had learned that God's grace was sufficient. **God blesses those who give according to and beyond their ability.**

We can learn from their example. We may not have a lot of material things, or have a lot of money, but can God still use us? Certainly! God has a way of multiplying the little that we have into what is needed. Remember the little boy who only had some bread and a few fish. Look what the Lord did when it was given to Him. We need to always be ready to give what we have and then see how God is going to use it for His glory.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:3-5

For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,

imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

And this they did, not as we had hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

Paul says that the Macedonian church gave not only what they could afford but also far more, and they did it because they wanted to, not because Paul told them to. The Macedonian church was so excited about helping the Christians in Jerusalem, that they begged Paul and Timothy to take their money. They could share in the joy of helping.

One of the most important things that we can learn in our lives about giving is that we need to have the right attitude about giving. We can give money, time or anything else and have bad attitude about it. What that happens we are robbed of a blessing. When we have the right attitude, the Lord is blessed and glorified.

Coupon Book

Have the children make a book of coupons of things they could do that would be giving, like walking someone's dog, washing someone's car, mowing someone's lawn, or cleaning someone's yard. They can give the book to someone they would like to serve. Remind the children that giving does not always have to do with money. We can give of our time, our things, or even our very lives in service to others.

Paul says that best of all, they went beyond his highest hopes and that their first action was to dedicate themselves to the Lord and then to Paul for whatever directions the Lord might give to them through Paul and Timothy. The Macedonians were eager to serve God and they lived in accordance to His will.

How can we develop a heart that is giving? First of all we need to commit our lives to the Lord. When the Holy Spirit lives inside of us He will help us to become more like Jesus. Jesus was always giving. He is our perfect example. So if we want to be more giving, lets give our lives to Jesus and allow Him to make us more giving.

The Macedonians' actions revealed their love and devotion to God and others. Prompted by God's love, the Macedonians became involved in the collection. Because they were in need due to their own poverty, Paul was hesitant about asking them for help, but they gave unselfishly, trusting God to meet their own needs. **God blesses those who give according to and beyond their ability.** Are we giving unselfishly?

2 CORINTHIANS 8:6-7

So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.

But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us--see that you abound in this grace also.

The church was so enthusiastic about their giving that Paul encouraged Titus to visit them and encourage them to complete their sharing in the ministry of giving. The Macedonians were leaders in so many ways. They had faith, good teaching, enthusiasm, and love for Paul and Timothy. Paul wanted to encourage them to be leaders also in the spirit of cheerful giving.

Paul mentioned the gift (God-given spiritual ability) of contributing to the needs of others (Romans 12:8). Paul wanted them to excel in their giving because giving expresses love. Giving is the essence of grace, and God has shown so much grace towards us that we should want to express our love to Him through unselfish giving, just like the Macedonians. **God blesses those who give according to and beyond their ability.**

Let's think of ways that we can be giving towards others. God wants us to be giving, even when it may mean that we have to give up or sacrifice something in order to do it. Jesus gave us His life so that we may have eternal life. We could never give more to the Lord than He has already given to us! As you give of your time, energy or money you will find that God will always bless you back.

Sacrifice of Time

Have the children write a letter or make a card for someone. Explain that writing to someone is a gift of our time and thought; it is not done very often anymore because it is easier to pick up the phone.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to give to the Lord as He allows. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.