

**THE BIG IDEA: Because of God's mercy, we get to be generous.**The Take-Off

As we continue to move closer to the big day, we love taking the time to pause and to give big.

That's what today is all about, and so before we dive into 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 (NLT), let's look back at the first 2 weeks of the Let It Snow series:

Week 1 was all about how God's mercy transforms our ugly hearts and makes them white as snow. Snow much transformation!!!

Week 2 was all about how God's mercy attracts people who need mercy. Snow many people!!! We learned that crowds can crush us, but when we put margin in our lives, the margin allows us to say yes to the crowd and give them the mercy they need.

And today, what we'll learn is that God's mercy is a reflection of God's generosity and that He wants us to be generous, too.

In fact, we're going to see that mercy results in generosity.

Snow much generosity!!!

Go to **2 Corinthians 8:1-15 (NLT)** and follow along while I read.

I don't usually have a lot of points, but this morning I've got 10. (Breathe, people!!)

Let's start at the verse 1 and let me point our 10 ways we'll give when we've been touched by God's generosity.

**1. Unexpectedly (vv. 1-2)**

- a. Notice what was happening in the Macedonian church
- b. They were being tested by troubles - not some, not a few, but many
- c. They were poor - not a little poor, but Paul says very poor
- d. Nobody would have expected them to have anything to give or to give any of what they did have
- e. But they had an abundance of joy, and they gave out of the overflow of that
- f. Nothing external can cut off an internal supply of joy

**2. Willingly (v. 3)**

- a. Paul points out that no one was twisting their arms to give
- b. So much teaching about generosity is based in fear or obligation
- c. Not here - they gave freely - they chose to give what they could afford and even more
- d. The flip side would also be true - many Christians choose not to give
- e. But let's at least own that we are making the choice - we're not victims of our mortgage or our car loan or our pet bills
- f. We're living with the consequences of our spending choices, for better or for worse
- g. We won't wake up some day automatically living generous lives - it starts by choosing to live generously

**3. Enthusiastically (v. 4)**

- a. This verse always reminds me of the woman in Brazil who tried to give me her last pack of crackers
- b. God's mercy causes us to look for ways to give, not for ways to get out of giving
- c. When new people come to our church and ask us where they can give their tithes, it's a sign of grace giving
- d. No one needed to remind the Macedonians to give - the Macedonians reminded Paul to let them give

**4. Correctly (v. 5)**

- a. This may not be the best word, but notice the order in which they processed giving
- b. Their FIRST action was to give themselves to the Lord
- c. Generosity is ALL ABOUT priorities - giving with God's heart requires having God's heart
- d. That happens by being with Him - John 15 - all about abiding - that's where the fruit comes from

**5. Excellently (v. 7)**

- a. There's an important distinction between the first 4 and the next 6
- b. What we've talked about to this point was about the Macedonians who were already giving generously

- c. The remains qualities are true about generous givers, but weren't true of the Corinthians
- d. That's why Paul is writing - to encourage them to start giving and living generously
- e. He encourages them have a standard of excellence in their giving
- f. Notice that everything Paul lists here - faith, speaking, knowledge, love - has to be developed
- g. I have grown in my ability to speak as I have spoken
- h. It is in the doing that the excelling happens
- i. "If I had more \_\_\_\_\_, I would start \_\_\_\_\_."
- j. The truth is the reverse: "When I start \_\_\_\_\_, I'll have more \_\_\_\_\_."
- k. Pursue excellence in generosity. The best way to do that is to start.

## 6. Eagerly (v. 8)

- a. Generosity is not a competition so we don't have to compare our giving to someone else's
- b. But what Paul is saying is that generous people stick out because of their eagerness to give
- c. That can cause less generous people to feel bad, but Paul's saying that's a test of the less generous heart
- d. Give eagerly and don't let the ones who drag their feet to the offering dampen your joy

## 7. Sacrificially (v. 9)

- a. Paul reminds the Corinthian believers why generosity should mark our lives
- b. It's all about what Jesus did for us
- c. The Big Idea says it this way: **because of God's mercy, we get to be generous.**
- d. We don't have to be. We get to be.
- e. It's an honor to partner with God in His plan to overwhelm the world with generosity!
- f. Jesus gave it all in order to give us all we need to give

## 8. Faithfully (vv. 10-11)

- a. Verses 10 and 11 sound like a parent instructing his kids: finish what you started
- b. Starting is a good thing, but Paul says that starters are a dime a dozen
- c. Finishing - giving faithfully to the end - is what reflects God's heart.
- d. **Phil. 1:6** / God is a finisher

## 9. Proportionately (vv. 11-12)

- a. With the last 2 qualities of generosity, Paul gets extremely practical
- b. Give proportionately - this is the genius of the tithe
- c. It keeps us from comparing amounts and feeling good about big gifts and bad about small ones
- d. The percentage makes it proportionate
- e. I love that last command in verse 12: give according to what you have, not what you don't have
- f. It's the keeping up with the Joneses that can keep us from giving
- g. We try to give what THEY have instead of giving what WE have

## 10. Equally (vv. 13-15)

- a. What happens when we give proportionately? Equality in generosity.
- b. When you have plenty, give, because some day the people you help will have plenty when you need help.
- c. God's plan of generosity is contagious and when His people get it, everyone wins.
- d. Notice the last 2 letters of the word generous? US.
- e. This grace of giving and generosity is best displayed to the world when it's displayed through ALL OF US.
- f. When we ALL give what we have, we'll ALL have what we need.

### The Landing

As we wrap this up and prepare for The Big Give, let me give you a quick reminder that giving comes easier when we remember that we're CHILDREN of God.

Life has a way of making adults cynics, and cynicism isn't generous.

This year, let's ALL be kids again.

**[VIDEO / The Other Christmas Gift]**