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## A Biblical Model for Giving

### 8: 1-8

**A biblical model for giving DIG: From First Corinthians 16:1, written about a year earlier, and Romans 15:25-27, written shortly after Paul had revisited Corinth, what is this collection all about? What do you learn about the Macedonians from their giving? In light of some of the struggles in Corinth, why would Paul call their attention to the Macedonian example?**

**REFLECT: What motivates you to give money? What motivates you not to give? What does it mean to give ourselves to God? Does the Bible say that you should tithe ten percent? How do you determine the difference between your “wants” and your “needs?” Were you taught about giving to the Lord when you were growing up? How can you teach your children now?**

**It is impossible to outgive God.**



How people view money is an effective barometer of their spirituality. **Money** is neither good nor bad in **itself**; corrupt people can put **it** to evil uses, while godly

people can put **it** to righteous uses. Though **it** is morally neutral, what people do with their **money** reflects their internal morality. In the words of **Yeshua: Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Luke 12:34)**. So, while the Bible doesn't forbid possessing **money**, it does forbid **loving it**, warning that **the love of money is a root of all evils (First Timothy 6:10)**. **Loving money** makes people forget **God (Deuteronomy 8:11-14; Proverbs 30:9)**, trust in their **riches** rather than **Him (Job 31:24-28; Psalm 52:7; Proverbs 11:28)**, **steal from God (Malachi 3:8)**, and ignore the needs of others (**First John 3:17; Proverbs 3:27**).

The Bible also gives guidelines on how to spend **money**. It is to be used to provide for the needs of one's **household (First Timothy 5:8)**, **pay debts (Romans 13:8)**, and save for **the future (Proverbs 21:20 and 30:25)**. Having met those basic obligations, **believers** are ready to **give money** to further the Kingdom, which results in greater giving from **God**. It is impossible to **outgive Him**. The promises associated with giving should stimulate **believers** to be sacrificially generous **givers**. Sadly, the powerful lure of the world's advertising, slick appeals from purportedly godly ministries, self-indulgence, and lack of faith all hinder **believers** from experiencing the full blessing of giving.<sup>182</sup>

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for not only giving us the wonderful gift of salvation, but also giving us joy on earth as we lovingly give back to **You**! Two wonderful gifts that you have given to us are prayer and **giving**. In prayer we enjoy the pleasure of fellowship with **You**, and in **giving** we enjoy pleasing You. It is true that **it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35)**. **Giving** takes our eyes off our own circumstances and it reaches out with a helping hand to **love** and to comfort someone. What a great example, giving of **Yourself** to rescue mankind! **You** left heaven's glory, humbled **Yourself**, **took on the form of a servant and became obedient, even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-11)**. What great **love** and mercy **You** showed!*

***Giving** is a pleasure as we offer our **love** back to **You**. It is **a blessing to give**; yet when we **give**, **You** return a greater **blessing** back on us, by **Your** loving approval. Thank **You** that it is not the size of **the gift** that gets your biggest approval; rather it is the size of the **love** from our heart that gets **Your** biggest approval. It is always a great joy to please **You**! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

In these verses **Paul** used the example of **the Macedonian's** remarkably generous

response to the collection appeal to motivate **the Corinthians** to carry out what **they** had previously shown **themselves** ready to do. In doing so, **Paul** gives **thirteen examples of godly giving**.

**1. Giving is motivated by God's grace (8:1):** Now, transitioning to a new subject, **brothers, their** relationship restored, **we must tell you about the grace God has given the congregations in Macedonia**, whom we use as an example of giving (8:1). The three churches Paul had in mind here were **Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Macedonia** was a terribly poor region, ravaged by wars and plundered by the Romans. But despite **their deep poverty, the Macedonian believers** were amazingly **generous (2 Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 2:25, 4:15 and 18)**. **The Corinthians** were apparently unaware of the magnitude of **the Macedonians' generosity**, prompting **Paul** to **tell them** about it. Their giving was not motivated primarily by philanthropy or human kindness, but by **the grace of God** at work in **their** hearts. One of the effects of saving, transforming, sanctifying **grace** is a longing to **give** generously and sacrificially to those in need, especially to other **believers**.

**2. Giving transcends difficult circumstances (8:2a):** **Paul's** strong language vividly depicts **the Macedonians' great ordeal** (Greek: *dokime*, referring to a trial) **of affliction** (Greek: *thlipsis*, literally, it refers to *pressure, as in crushing grapes*; figuratively, it describes *the spiritual pressure the Macedonians endured from their poverty and persecution*). Scripture repeatedly describes the suffering endured by **the Macedonian churches (Acts 17:5-8; First Thessalonians 2:14-15; Second Thessalonians 1:4; Philippians 1:29)**. But **the Macedonians** rose above **their** difficult circumstances. **They** did not allow their situation to have a negative effect on their giving. In the midst of their trials, **they** put the needs of others, whom **they** had never met, ahead of **their** own. Though **their poverty** may have limited the amount **they** could **give**, it did not diminish **their love**. Devout believers **give** no matter what the situation, because the worst circumstances cannot hinder their devotion to **Yeshua Messiah**.

**3. Giving is not hindered by poverty (8:2b):** To express how little **the Macedonians** actually had, **Paul** described **their** impoverishment in strong language. **Even though they were desperately** (Greek: *bathos*, meaning *extremely deep*) **poor**. Or you could say, "They had hit rock bottom." **The poverty** (Greek: *ptocheia*, meaning *having almost nothing, or being forced to beg to survive*) **they** experienced is likened to **Messiah's poverty** when **He emptied Himself, taking on the form of a bond-servant (Philippians 2:7)**. A related word,

*ptochos*, is used to describe **the blind and the lame (Luke 14:13 and 21)**, a destitute **widow (Mark 12:42)**, and **Lazarus the beggar (Luke 16:20)**. The **Macedonians'** confidence that God would supply all **their** needs freed **them** to **give** generously. Devout **believers** do not wait until **they** have more **money**; **they give** despite **their poverty** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Je - The Widow's Offering**). **Giving** is not a matter of how much one possesses, but is an expression of an unselfish and **loving** heart. **The Macedonians'** refusal to allow **their** poverty to stifle their generosity made **them** models for biblical giving.

**4. Giving is with abundant joy (8:2c):** The **Macedonians** did not **give** grudgingly, reluctantly, out of a sense of duty or duress. **They gave** out of an **abundance** (Greek: *perisseia*, meaning *a surplus or an overflow*) **of joy**. **They** were never motivated by fear of divine punishment or of **Paul's** displeasure. **They gave** gladly, freely, and **joyfully**, knowing that **God loves a cheerful giver (9:7)**. In other words, **the Macedonians's joy** transcended **their** pain, sorrow, and suffering. **Paul** wrote **the Thessalonians**, **"You, indeed, became imitators of us and of the Lord; so that even though you were going through severe troubles, you received the Word with joy from the Ruach Ha'Kodesh"** (**First Thessalonians 1:6**, and also see **Acts 5:41**). **Their giving** reflected that reality, as **they joyfully gave** of what little **they** had. **They** rejoiced at **storing up wealth in heaven (Matthew 6:20, 19:21; Luke 12:33)**, knowing that the greater blessing is to **the giver**, not the receiver (**Acts 20:35**), and that **ADONAI** will **give** back in greater measure, **give and it will be given to you (Luke 6:38)**.

**5. Giving is generous (8:2d):** **Paul** now explicitly states what has been implied throughout the passage, piling up words to express the profound **generosity** of **the Macedonians**. **They overflowed in a wealth of generosity**. **Overflowed** translates *perisseuo*, the verb form of the noun translated **abundance** above. Scripture uses it to describe the surplus goods of the rich (**Mark 12:44**), an **abundance** of material possessions (**Luke 12:15**), **God's** saving **grace** that **abounds in sinners (Romans 15:15; Ephesians 1:7-8)**, **the abundant hope** produced by **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh (Romans 15:13)**, **the abundant comfort** that **believers** have in **Messiah (1:5)**, and **God's** abundant **grace** toward **believers (9:8)**. Though they were not rich in material possessions, **the Macedonians** did possess **a wealth of generosity** (Greek: *haplotes*, meaning *liberally*, but can also be translated *simply* or *sincerely*). It is the opposite of being double-minded whose ability to **give** is crippled because of selfishness. But **the**

**Macedonians** were rich in single-mindedness, giving no thought to **themselves** or to the world.<sup>183</sup>

**6. Giving is proportionate (8:3a):** Paul had first hand experience of **the Macedonians' generosity (Philippians 4:15-18)**. **I tell you they have not merely given according to their means**. The Bible sets no fixed amount or percentage for giving (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Do - When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others**). That would prove sacrificial for some but inconsequential for others. However, many churches can get pretty legalistic about giving ten percent. Taken from the TaNaKh (the Old Testament) they **declare** that it is the "biblical mandate for giving." But if they really want to follow the biblical mandate of the "Old Testament," they should encourage their members to **give** much more. In the Torah there are three main tithes, which equaled about twenty-five percent (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Cx - Do Not Neglect the Levite**)!

**7. Giving is voluntary (8:3b):** **The Macedonians giving** was on **their** own initiative and **of their own free will**. **They** were not coerced, manipulated, or intimidated. It is possible that **Paul**, aware of **their** deep poverty, had not even asked **them** to contribute to the destitute Jews in Jerusalem. It is evident from **8:10** and **9:2** that about a year had passed since **he** first told **the Corinthians** about the collection. When **Paul** told **the Macedonians** about the zeal of **the Corinthians** to contribute, **the Macedonians** were also moved to give (**9:2**). Events had then come full circle. **The Corinthians'** zeal had initially prompted **the Macedonians** to give, now **Paul** held **them** up as an example of sacrificial giving for the lagging **Corinthians** to imitate.

**8. Giving is sacrificial (8:3c):** **The Macedonians gave** according to what they had, but in proportions that were sacrificial. In other words, **they have given beyond their means; beyond** what could reasonably be expected of such poor congregations. Life was difficult for **them**. **They** faced extreme poverty and persecution. Yet, despite **their** desperate circumstances, **they** joyfully **gave** with no regard for **themselves**, compelled by the needs of the poor Jewish **believers** in Jerusalem. **They** believed **God's** promise to supply all **their** needs (**Philippians 4:19**), and refused to worry about them (**Matthew 6:25-34**), gladly placing themselves in deeper dependence on **Him**. Like **David**, who would not **give the Lord** something that **cost him nothing** (see the commentary on **the Life of David El - David Builds an Altar**), and **the poor widow** who **gave all she had** (**Mark 12:42-44**), **the Macedonians gave** with selfless abandon.

**9. Giving is a privilege, not an obligation (8:4):** Paul once again stressed that he in no way pressured the Macedonians to give. Instead, they begged and pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service for God's people. The Greek word **begged** is *deomai*, and is a strong word meaning to *implore*. It is used in **Luke 5:12** of a leper who implored Yeshua to heal him, in **Luke 9:38** of a father's desperate plea for Messiah to cast a demon out of his son, and in **Second Corinthians 5:20** begging sinners to be reconciled to ADONAI. The Greek word for **privilege** is *charis*, which is commonly translated *grace*. They literally **begged** for the blessing of helping to meet the needs of believers they had never met. They did so, not out of a sense of obligation, but out of the generosity of their transformed lives.

**10. Giving is an act of worship (8:5a):** Also introduces the next feature of the Macedonians' giving. They didn't do this in the way Paul had expected. He had hoped for an offering, which they did give freely, but they first gave themselves to the Lord. The Greek word for **first** (*protos*) has the meaning here not of first in time, but of **first** priority (**Mark 6:21; Luke 19:47; Acts 13:50, 16:12, 17:4, 25:2, 28:7** and **17**). The Macedonians' first priority was to give themselves wholeheartedly to the Lord, and giving financially to the church followed. The supreme act of worship is not giving money, attending services, or singing worship songs, but giving oneself (**Romans 12:1-2**). As a holy priesthood, believers are to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Yeshua Messiah (**First Peter 2:5**), the most important of which is themselves. Only when a devout life, given to Messiah wholly, does financial giving become an acceptable act of worship.

**11. Giving is submitting to biblical authority (8:5b-6):** Having given themselves to the Lord, the Macedonians also gave themselves to Paul, Titus, and Timothy. In fact, it was their devotion to the Lord which led them to submit to the leadership of their pastors. It is God's will (8:5) that believers submit to those over them in the Lord. **Hebrews 13:17** instructs believers, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your lives, as people who will have to render an account. So make it a task of joy for them, not one of groaning; for that is of no advantage to you. Confident that the Corinthians would follow the example of the Macedonians and submit to their pastors' direction, Paul urged Titus to bring this same gracious gift to completion among you, since he has already made a beginning of it about a year earlier (**First Corinthians 16:2**) when he brought

the severe letter to **them**. So, **Paul** through **his letters** and **Titus** through **his** visit had both informed **the Corinthians** about what **they** encouraged **them** to do.<sup>184</sup>

**12. Giving is closely tied to other godly virtues (8:7):** **Giving** does not take place in a vacuum, isolated from other godly virtues. It cannot be done contrary to what is in the heart, for that would be hypocrisy. **Paul's** encouragement to **the Corinthians**, “**Just as you excel in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in diligence of every kind, and in your love for us - see that you excel in this gift too (8:7)**. **The Macedonians** had shown by **their** astonishingly generous response to **Paul's** appeal for the collection. When **he** likewise urged **the Corinthians** participate, it was an opportunity for **them** to demonstrate the genuineness of **their** own godly virtues. True **love** never leaves us content merely to talk; it has to be expressed through our actions (**Luke 19:1-10; First John 3:16-18**).<sup>185</sup>

**13. Giving is proof of love (8:8):** As **he** concluded **his** discussion of a biblical model for giving, **Paul** reminded **the Corinthians** that **he** was **not issuing an order**. That emphasized yet again the fundamental principle that giving in the church is voluntary, freewill giving. Had **Paul** prescribed an amount or a fixed percentage, **the Corinthians'** giving would have been in obedience to **an order**. **Rather, Paul** challenged **the Corinthians** to prove **the genuineness of their love against the diligence of the Macedonians**. The true **test of love** is not feelings, but actions: **If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar. For if a person does not love his brother, whom he has seen, then he cannot love God, whom he has not seen. Yes, this is the command we have from Him: whoever loves God must love his brother too (First John 4:20-21)**. The voluntary, generous, sacrificial giving modeled by **the Macedonians** was an example not only for **the Corinthians**, but also for all **believers**. It is the path to experiencing the rich blessings of **ADONAI** in this lifetime and for eternity.<sup>186</sup>