

of Discipleship

September 4, 2022

Day 1: II Corinthians 8:7

Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

The generous undertaking was an offering for the church in Jerusalem. Paul promised to collect money for the Jerusalem church because they were under a lot of financial stress. The Corinthian church had promised to make an offering and Paul is telling them that as they took pride in “excelling” in everything else they ought to excel in giving. I believe what keeps us from being as generous as we might be is the fear we will not have enough for ourselves. Or that what we have given away, we will need sometime in the future.

Question: What do you excel in?

Challenge: Create a working definition of generous that you can use to measure your generosity.

Scripture: II Corinthians 8:1-8

Day 2: II Corinthians 8:8-9

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

Jesus is always the one who leads. He leads in all areas of life. Jesus never asks us to go someplace or do something that He has not done. Jesus will always be with us in any situation. Jesus’ example of becoming poor when he was rich stands out as the prime example of why we should be grateful. Genuine love does not act for any other reason but that love has propelled us to act. The difference between genuine love and “earnestness” is that love will last while earnestness is of the moment.

Question: Has your love been tested?

Challenge: How would you explain to someone why God loved us so much as to send His son to die for us?

Scripture: II Corinthians 11:1-33

Day 3: II Corinthians 8:10-11

And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something—now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means.

“You have more than you need” are words that we do not like to hear. We especially do not like someone else telling us we have too much and need to give some away. We want to be the judge of what we need and how much we need. Paul is challenging not only the Corinthians, but us in the 21st century to examine what we have and realize that we have too much. We need to realize that we have more than we need. It is our wants that cause us to believe we do not have enough.

Question: Does this sound like making a yearly pledge to the church?

Challenge: How much did you pledge to God’s work for 2010?

Scripture: II Corinthians 12:1-18

Day 4: II Corinthians 8:12

For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have.

The gift is to be given out of gratitude and with love. Gratitude because of what Jesus gave to us and out of love because that is how God wants us to express our gratitude. I can only express my gratitude to the extent that I feel grateful. If I try to act loving or grateful and do not feel it I will be seen as a phony. Authenticity is what convinces others of what we believe.

Question: What gifts can you give that do not involve money?

Challenge: Think back over the last few years and see what gifts you appreciated the most.

Scripture: Mark 12:36-13:2

Day 5: II Corinthians 8:13-14

I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance.

Paul is stating that as the Corinthians give their money to the Jerusalem church they will receive a gift in return. The return gift in fact has already been given. It was given in the fact that the Jerusalem church was rich in sending out the first missionaries. In a sense Paul is saying that the Corinthian church is currently giving for a gift that was given in the past to them (all be it indirectly).

Question: Do you think exchanging gifts is a good idea?

Challenge: Think of a gift that you can give this year that expresses both gratitude for some past gift and can be used for the future.

Scripture: II Corinthians 9:1-15

Day 6: II Corinthians 8:15

As it is written, ‘The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.’

This verse is stating that a person can have too much, and isn’t that true. We read about a number of people that have too much money and end up doing dumb things with that money. They sometimes even show disdain for life itself. People with too much or too little will act in ways that are not helpful to themselves or society. It is not the amount of money we have but our attitude toward it and toward life itself.

Question: Be honest, would you rather have too much or too little?

Challenge: Think of living on half of your income. Then think of living on triple your income. Which will cause the most stress and why?

Scripture: Matthew 16:21-17:3