

CORINTHIANS, GENEROSITY

Monday June 27th - Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-4. The Roman Empire was swindling Macedonia out of its most valuable minerals and timber while applying a heartless taxation policy. Christians were routinely arrested and abused because they did not worship Claudius Caesar. Yet Paul writes the Macedonia Christians had abundant joy and generosity. Have you ever experienced a tragically difficult time? Were there moments of extreme gratitude toward God and the “angels” he sent to give you peace and hope – gratitude greater than you felt during better times? Do you believe that God, in part, eases our pain by bringing us into deeper connection and fellowship with others? Do you believe that our spirits may become more generous when we are experiencing pain? Perhaps you might pray for better understanding of the Macedonians’ “wealth of generosity.”

Tuesday, June 28th – Read 2 Corinthians 8:6-7. Titus was more popular with the Corinthians than Paul or Timothy because he had remained an uncircumcised gentile. Paul was a Jewish Christian to the core, and Timothy had chosen (with a little help from his friends) to be circumcised. Paul wants the Corinthians to dig deep and to pay the pledges they’ve made so he’s very complimentary about their strengths and he sends a popular leader to collect the money. Preachers are sometimes advised to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. It seems the Corinthians were a mite too comfortable. What do you think of Paul’s methods here? Would you apply them if you were part of a church stewardship drive? How would you have reacted as a Christian in the pews of Corinth?

Wednesday, June 29th – Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. In another letter to the Corinthians, Paul tells them precisely how to collect money to send to the poverty collection led by James (the brother of Jesus) in Jerusalem. For Paul, this collection was directly connected to the Cross and the sacrifice of Christ. This isn’t a letter on efficiency. It is a letter on weekly connecting to the Cross. Might it be a good weekly exercise to set aside some money you happened to have left over to connect you to the Cross – even as a symbolic gesture?

Thursday, June 30th - 2 Corinthians 8:8-11. Apparently the year before, the Corinthians had made a specific (probably large) pledge to the Jerusalem poverty project. And they reneged. Paul knows they have the means. There was much wealth in the church. They hadn’t fallen on hard times since the year before. Did you ever, in a moment’s enthusiasm, pledge time or money or talents to a good cause and then put off following through? It’s a pretty common temptation. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they have been richly blessed by Christ who died so they might have eternal life, that Christ whom they follow was profoundly generous. Paul also suggests we not lose our eagerness to do good for others less fortunate. What keeps your eagerness going through busy or tiresome times?

Friday, July 1st - 2 Corinthians 8:12-15. Paul reminds the Corinthians they might become Christians who fall on hard times. Anything can happen. The wage earner could become too ill to work. The family might be forced out of Corinth into the streets of Jerusalem. The day could come when a Corinthian would need the Jerusalem collection to keep himself and his family alive. The purpose of the Jerusalem collection was that all – Jew and Gentile – are now one community in Christian love. And we are not just a charitable organization, we are one through the Cross.

Saturday, July 2nd - 1 John 3:16-17. And here in the loving Epistle of John, the same thought is applied so beautifully. (Everything is beautiful in the Epistles of John.) Every day we see the world’s goods. Every day we see (or know about) a brother or sister in need. Help needs to be effective, of course. It needs to be for the good of the other, and not for our selfish purposes. If God’s love is going to live inside us, we must be eager to use what has been given to us to meet the needs of others – our gifts, our time, and our worldly resources.

Love: How do these devotions teach about the love of God and the love for one another?
Learn: What have you learned about where Jesus walked that helps you with where you walk?
Share: What key insights have you learned this week on how to share your faith with others?
Serve: Look at the prayer list. Who can you pray for? Who needs a little extra help in an area where you can make a difference?

Healing Strength: Chris Rosemeyer, Chris & Katie Hamon, Larry & Cheryl Dilk, Mary Schmidt, Rex Townsend, Stan Ensich, Chris Osborn (Ken and Sandy Grubb’s daughter), Janet Coons (Donna McCullough’s daughter)

Homebound Members: Mary Hicks, Mary Schmidt, Joann Young, Jeanne Carman

Military Personnel: Adam Walters, Joseph Roberts, Lucas Lamkin, Adam Clark