

It is worth remembering that the generosity that Paul urges here is not for their local church – but rather for people they have never met. (Elsewhere Paul will talk of giving to church as an obligation rather than an act of generosity- see 1 Tim 5:17-18).

1. Do you find it difficult to be generous towards the saints in places outside your locality? Why/Why not?

2. Does your church find it difficult to be generous towards God's work in other places? Why/Why not?

3. Finally, how should you respond to God's Word to you today?

Try and help think concretely about what steps they can take in being generous beyond their local sphere.

give

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

leader's notes

Introductory Brainstorm

What things stop people from being generous with their money (and other possessions, time etc.)? Come up with as many as possible, then asterisk the ones you think are the most significant.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Paul writes to the Corinthians because they have made a pledge to give to the collection he is making for the saints in Jerusalem who have been enduring a famine. He now writes to remind them of this pledge, so that when he arrives they will have the money ready to give as a willing gift, rather than being an unwilling obligation. He also teaches them the motivations and thinking that should underpin our giving.

1. Read through the passage again. List all the phrases that relate to the idea of 'abundance' or 'increase' or 'all'. What clues does this give us to the central message of the passage?

There is much there: abundance, increasing, bountifully, all grace, sufficiency. See verse 8 with its multiple 'alls', multiply, enrich, overflowing, surpassing grace of God.

These all point towards the passage being about what God can do in people - his grace can produce great generosity which in turn produces an abundance of good works and praise to God.

2. What is the basic principle Paul outlines in verse 6. How would you put it in your own words?

Have a closer look at verses 7-11

1. How is God described in these verses?

Highlight that the passage is dealing with their small view of God. The reason they won't sow bountifully in verse 6, is because they don't really trust that God will look after them and increase their supply for doing good.

Also, they don't really value the harvest of righteousness that is available.

2. Paul quotes from Psalm 112. Read this Psalm. What is the righteous man like (especially from verses 5-9)?

He is generous and just, but also trusts in God. Those two things are connected. He can be generous because of his trust.

3. What is Paul saying in these verses? Is he advocating a type of 'prosperity' teaching – that those who give much will gain much?

It is important to deal with this issue of prosperity. Paul is not saying "Give, so you can become rich". Rather he is saying, "Be generous, and God will give you a harvest of righteousness, and he is able to supply more for you to give if he wills. God is able to provide the means for you to be generous- because he wants you to abound in good works."

4. From these verses, why should a Christian resist the urge to be a stingy sower?

Have a closer look at verses 11-15

As well as meeting the needs of people, what other impact will the generosity of the Corinthians have? Why is this the case?

It causes other people to praise God – overflowing in thanksgiving. They will glorify God because they see generosity and they see the grace of God at work in the Corinthian's lives.

What is the connection between the gospel and the generosity of the Corinthians from these verses (see also 2 Corinthians 8:9)?

Verse 13: their generosity flows from their confession of the gospel of Christ – they submit to it. It is evidence of God's grace at work in their lives. This is no surprise as verse 15 reminds them of his indescribable gift. The very nature of the gospel is God's generosity – his gift to us. See also 2 Corinthians 8:9 for the model of Jesus' generosity.

Conclusion

Coming back to our opening question, how does this passage deal with the reasons that prevent generous giving?

The passage deals with our (in)security – God is able to give us all we need to be generous. His grace can work in us to be the cheerful givers he wants. He can supply what we need to be generous. In fact he can increase this supply to increase our generosity if he desires.

Understanding that our generosity has a larger effect beyond meeting the immediate need should also motivate us. Not only is the need met, but it causes others to glorify God!

'Ultimately, it is our understanding of God that will have the most significant impact upon our generosity'. What do you think of this statement?