

LC STUDY GUIDE

Done in Sync with the "State of the Church" 2016 Sermon

The Passage: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

For Life Community usage 2/8/16 - 2/21/16

Intro:

Pastor Bryan gave a "State of the Church" address on February 7 in which he shared an update on the Next Generosity initiative, the goodness happening throughout our campuses, and more about the lives that have been changed through the ministries and community that has been rooted in the surprising message of grace through Jesus. In this study, we are taking a deeper look at the passage shared on Sunday and what Paul says about generosity and the work of the Kingdom.

Central Point – Great things happen in the lives of others and in our own lives when we live and give generously.

The Passage: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written:

"They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever."

10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

○ – Identify the instances of Paul's usage of "harvest" language.

I – What do you think is the correlation between harvest and giving?

(The metaphor of harvest language highlights "the freedom of the sower to plant as much seed as he chooses – whether 'sparingly' or 'generously.'" [Expositor's Bible Commentary, edited by Frank Gaebelin, Murray Harris, p. 376])

O – In verse 7, what instruction and balance does Paul recommend about giving generously?

O – What does Paul say that God is able to provide to the cheerful giver (vv. 8-10)?

A – How do we as faithful and generous Christ-followers, avoid the "prosperity gospel" mentality (the idea that God must make you rich because you've been giving to the church) while recognizing that God will provide abundantly to those who sow generously? What must we remember and apply in heart and practice?

(Following Paul's teaching, we give out of a heart of generosity and not out of an attempt to manipulate God into blessing us with "health" and "wealth." According to this passage, the cheerful giver is blessed.)

I – Paul quotes Psalm 112:9 in verse 9 to root the point he's trying to make – that there is a relationship between righteousness, provision, and "wealth" in verses 12-14. We know that "wealth" is not merely about possessions and money. But we also know there is often trouble with accumulating wealth exclusively for oneself. According to Paul, what should you do with money and how should you regard wealth?

(Paul sees money as a tool to help others and to build the Kingdom of Jesus. He sees giving as a principle of obedience and thankfulness to God. And he sees "wealth" as being a blessing beyond merely money and also an aspect of "righteousness," as in "right living." There is provision, abundance, and joy that comes from giving generously.)

A – The point of our study is that great things happen in the lives of others and in our lives when we are generous. We know this is not an overnight change but a developed mentality, a life ethic and practice that takes shape over many years. What wisdom and encouragement can we share with each other when it comes to building the spirit of generosity?

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- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
 - b. Complement these questions with "process questions" (what else? what more? what do others think?)
 - c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don't rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
 - d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
 - e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into "teaching" rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.