

Christian giving: proportional

discussion guide

based on **2 Corinthians 8.7-15** (Linked to sermon of 4/5/25)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/current-sermon-series

This is part of a short series on Christian giving.

Intro: Dan said that giving is good for us because we're made to give. Discuss!

Read 2 Cor 8.7-15

As last week, Paul is talking about a collection that he was encouraging the Gentile Christians to take up for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem – who were facing a famine. Having just described how the church in Macedonia responded, he now turns to the church in Corinth.

The Corinthian church were very big on spiritual gifts (remember 1 Corinthians 13?). Paul alludes to that again in v7 – and challenges them to excel in the gift of giving as well. Giving, like evangelism and serving, seems to be something which *all* Christians are commanded to do (as a spiritual discipline), although *some* have a particular spiritual gift in this area. Why do you think giving is for *everyone*, not just for *some* Christians? Why do you think God gives some Christians this as a spiritual gift?

Is it a gift you would like to have – or would you prefer other gifts?

Paul reminds them of how much Jesus gave up for us (v9), to inspire them to give more. How do Jesus' sacrifices inspire you?

Three times Paul talks about a desire or willingness to give (v10, 11, 12). Have you ever felt pressured to give, or that you *ought* to give? How different does it feel like to give when you *want* to give?

Dan mentioned an occasion when his willingness to give hadn't been matched by his completion of it (v11) – ie he hadn't followed up on his good intentions. Is this verse a nudge to you to follow through on any good intentions?

Paul talks about giving according to our means (v11-12). Why is it important to focus on what one has, not on what one doesn't have, when considering how much to give?

If giving according to our means is a 'normal' pattern of Christian giving, how do we discern when God is calling us to give 'beyond our ability' (as v3)?

Paul had previously told them: "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income" (1 Cor 16.2). Why is it important to give 'on the first day'? What could that look like for you?

Dan explained how the Greek (predominantly Gentile) churches giving to the predominantly Jewish Christians in and around Jerusalem was quite a radical idea. How do you think the gifts helped Christian unity, as well as alleviated poverty? Think from both the giver's and the receiver's point of view. How might this apply today?

What is one thing you need to think about more as a result of this discussion?

What is one thing you're going to do as a result of this discussion?

This series on Christian giving is coinciding with the start of Restore & Renew – although obviously it relates to much more than that! If you didn't watch the launch video last time (www.stjamesbythepark.org/rr), watch it together now.

Spend some time thanking God for his generosity to us; praying that God would stir our hearts to give generously of our time, talents and treasures; praying for Restore & Renew (you could say the prayer below together).

*Gracious Father,
We look to you in faith for Restore and Renew.
Keep our eyes fixed on Christ the cornerstone, not on the buildings themselves.
Help those on our buildings teams to lead this project faithfully.
Please provide all we need – skills, gifts, time and money –
to renovate our buildings for all.
Everything we have has come from you;
Open our hearts to give back to you what is yours already.
Let us prove once again that it is more blessed to give than to receive.
And when the building work is finished,
we pray that our buildings will provide great places for us and many others
to go deeper with you,
grow closer to each other
and reach further with the love of Jesus.
Amen.*