

God & Money

Open Hands

Text: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 (NLT)

Generous Giving:

Open hands are evidence of a surrendered heart.

Seven phases outline the Macedonian churches' approach to giving:

1. Grace (2 Cor. 8:1 NLT).

- Paul goes to collect an offering from the churches he founded to deliver to the church in Jerusalem.
- God's grace was expressed through the generosity of the Macedonian churches (Rom. 15:26).
- The word "contribution" in Romans 15:26 derives from the Greek word *Koinonia*, meaning *fellowship*. In this context, it refers to joining others through financial support. The Macedonian and Achaian churches provided financial support to the believers in Jerusalem.
- Paul hoped that through the collection, Gentile believers could show their generosity and love for their Jewish brothers and sisters. He also hoped that it would promote unity among the believers (See 2 Cor 8–9). John D. Barry et al., Faithlife Study Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Rom. 15:26.
 - Personal Application: We should also embrace the spirit of giving and lead with generosity, as the Macedonians did.

2. Trial (2 Cor. 8:2 NLT)

- The Macedonian churches were no strangers to hardship. These churches had faced persecution since their founding and were financially poor (Acts 16-17; Phil. 1:28-30; 1 Thess. 1:6).
- Despite persecution and financial hardship, they found great *joy* and *showed generosity* in their giving.
- Personal Application: Rejoicing should be our response to persecution (Matt. 5:11-12).

3. Sacrificially (2 Cor. 8:3 NLT)

- Paul tells us they gave beyond their means. Their *love for God* and His church enabled them to sustain this high level of generosity.

- Sacrifice is the true measure of love. The degree of one's love for someone is measured by the extent of one's sacrifice for that person.
- Personal Application: Be willing to give sacrificially as the Lord leads you (Mark 12:41-44).

4. Sharing (2 Cor. 8:4 NLT)

- They sought to share and partner with other churches to meet the financial needs of the believers in Jerusalem.
- Once again, this demonstrates their love for God and for His work. This also shows they had a kingdom mindset about their resources (2 Cor. 9:7; Matt. 6:19-21).
- Personal Application: Be willing to share your financial resources to advance God's kingdom.

5. First (2 Cor. 8:5 NLT)

- Their giving was first and foremost to the Lord and served as a model for Christian giving.
- Giving ourselves to the Lord is seen in surrendering every area of our lives to Him, including our finances (Matt. 6:24).
- Personal Application: Give yourself to the Lord daily.

6. Encouragement (2 Cor. 8:6 NLT)

- Paul sent Titus, one of his leaders, back to Corinth to deliver 2 Corinthians and to resume oversight of the offering, which was to be completed before Paul's arrival (2 Cor. 9:5).
- Personal Application: If you are a leader, encourage those under your care to honor God by their giving.

7. Excel (2 Cor. 8:7 NLT)

- "Charis" is the Greek word used here, referring to an expression of generosity specifically toward the church in Jerusalem.
- Personal Application: Excel in your giving, just as you excel in other areas.

Following Macedonia's Example:

Here is one practical step we can take to emulate the Macedonians.

1. Surrender Your Heart to Christ.

- Surrendered hearts come before open hands.
- Those who have an issue with the tithe and offerings have not fully surrendered their hearts to Christ.

Call to Action:

If you do not tithe, I challenge you to put God to the test for the next 90 days (June 7-Sept 5). Watch and see what God will do in your life and finances. How to Register for the 90-Day Commitment:

1. You can scan the QR code on the screen behind me.
2. Pledge cards will be available at the Information booth to fill out and turn in at the offering box.
3. You can tap the circle on the back of the chair, then click "My Committed Tithes For 90-Days."
4. You can register through the Church Center App under the Register tab.