

STEWARDSHIP – #1

“The Deeper Current”

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

THE BIG IDEA

Money is powerful, and the current economy has revealed its true power. Money has the power to make us feel scared, insecure, and uncertain about the future. It also has the power to make us feel valuable, safe, and successful. But God has something to say about these things! When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth to ask them to fulfill their pledge to help the church in Jerusalem, he wasn't just interested in their money. He was interested in their pledge to God himself. This idea echoes what Jesus said in Matthew 6:24 when he said that we cannot serve both God and money. God doesn't need our money, but he knows that if he gets it, he will get our hearts—his real treasure!

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. If you won the lottery, what would you buy first?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

2. If you ran into a friend and they asked what the main point of the sermon on Sunday was, how would you answer her?

Together, read **2 Corinthians 8:1-15**.

3. Talk about the power that money has in our culture. What are some common things that people look to money to provide?
4. According to verses 1-5, what is the priority of the church in Macedonia? How does that priority affect their generosity?
5. What does Paul call the Corinthians to remember in verse 9? How does he hope that remembering this will affect the Corinthians?
6. Based on these verses in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, do you think that Paul is more interested in their money or their hearts? Why?
7. Jim said that, “God doesn't need your money, but he knows that if he gets your money, he will get your hearts.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

8. On Sunday we talked about 3 ways to offer God our hearts via our money: PRIORITY giving (giving to God takes top priority each month over all our other wants and needs); PERCENTAGE giving (committing to a certain percentage of our income to give each month); and PROGRESSIVE giving (the amount we give grows as our faith and trust in God grows).

Which of these 3 P’s challenges you the most? Why?

THE “EXTRA MILE”

9. This week you have been asked to pray about your pledge for 2009, and then to offer it in worship next Sunday. Take time out each day to ask God what this amount will be for you. Will you need to let go of something in order to meet that pledge? What is God asking you to give in 2009?

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“Money has the real, unrivaled power to reveal the **actual condition of the human heart**. Nothing else does that quite the way that money does. Because money is the way that we assign value to reality. Money is the way that we keep score. Money is the epicenter of the intersection between the spiritual and the material. It is the primary resource that human beings look to – outside of God – for what we most crave.”

-John Ortberg

STEWARDSHIP – #2

“The Importance of Thanksgiving” Philippians 4:6-7

THE BIG IDEA

We are at our best when we are grateful. Many would say that gratitude is at the heart of the Christian faith. Throughout scripture God calls his people to be grateful (Psalm 118:1, Colossians 2:7, Colossians 3:15, 1 Thess.5:18, Hebrews 12:25 to name a few). But why this focus on thanking God? What is it about gratitude that God finds so important? And how can gratitude help us when we encounter difficult times like so many of us are encountering this Thanksgiving season? Paul knew something of difficult times as he wrote from prison to the Philippian church. Take a look!

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. What is one of your favorite Thanksgiving traditions?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD’S WORD

2. Why is gratitude such an important part of the Christian life?

Together, read **Philippians 4:6-7**.

3. Paul tells us not to be “anxious about anything”. This is a tall order to fill! What, if anything, is causing you anxiety or worry this Thanksgiving season?
4. According to the text, how is it possible to be grateful even when our circumstances don’t lend themselves to it? How is it possible to be grateful when we don’t feel like it?
5. How does giving thanks deepen our relationship with God?
6. Steve said that we have 3 tendencies:
 1. To forget about God and that God is in control even when life is difficult
 2. To forget about what God has done in the past, having short memories that God has been faithful in the past
 3. To be ungrateful, seeing only the negative rather than the positive.

Which of these tendencies do you find most in yourself?

7. How can being grateful help overcome these tendencies listed above?

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

8. Take a few minutes to write out what you are thankful for. List all the things you can think of that you consider gifts from God.

Share your list with your group or with a friend or family member, then join together in prayer thanking God for all the gifts he has given you.

THE “EXTRA MILE”

9. As you celebrate Thanksgiving this week, try one of these practices of gratitude:
 - Take a moment each night before bed to thank God for the gifts he has given you each day.
 - Before your Thanksgiving meal, take a moment to go around the table and invite each person to say what they are thankful for. Together, offer your thanks to God.
 - For each difficult situation you encounter this week, take a moment to lift each concern to God, asking him to help you remember to be grateful for his faithfulness

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“Gratitude is the one thing that is unconditionally and inescapably demanded of us.”

-Karl Barth

“The atheist’s most embarrassing moment is when he feels profoundly thankful for something, but can’t find anyone to thank for it.”

-Mary Ann Vincent

