



## GROWTH GROUP SPRING 2019

**FOCUSED: EXPERIENCING & EXPRESSING THE TRANSFORMING LOVE OF CHRIST**  
WEEK 4 – MAY 19, 2019 - ACTS 11:27-30 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

### GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

1) How would you define “generous?”

#### Acts 11:27-30

*27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.*

### SETTING THE CONTEXT

This is the last week of our spring growth group series. Our theme is around generosity and we will read about two examples of this in Acts 11 and 2 Corinthians 9.

At some point while Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch some prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Agabus predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world during the reign of Claudius who ruled from 41 to 54 AD. Soon after hearing this report the early church collected a gift and had Barnabas and Saul deliver it to Jerusalem. Acts 11:29 is very similar to Acts 2:45 and 4:35 which describe how each person gave as they were able.

It would have been very easy for the people of Antioch to have focused on their own needs and concerns. They could easily have said that the church in Jerusalem was different than theirs. The believers in Jerusalem were focused on the issues of proper food and circumcision, issues with which the believers in Antioch did not concern themselves. The consensus could easily have become why should we help them? Instead, they reached out with compassion and generosity. Offerings were collected and the church in Jerusalem was more than likely encouraged by Antioch’s generosity.



## Read 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!*

## SETTING THE CONTEXT

Paul says there are certain benefits that come with being generous.

1. Generosity makes people spiritually rich (2 Cor 9:8–10).
2. Generosity brings thanksgiving to God (2 Cor 9:11–13).
3. Recipients of generosity respond with prayers for those who have been generous (2 Cor 9:14).
4. Generosity advances the well-being and unity of the worldwide Christian community (2 Cor 9:13–14).

Paul uses farming imagery to get his point across about generosity. No farmer considers sowing with a loss of seed because the harvest will provide the seed for the next season. Thus, the more one sows, the greater the harvest will be, and the more seed the farmer will have for the next harvest. The idea that generosity would be met with a blessing was a long-held tenet of the Jewish faith. However, please note, Paul is not saying that if you give, in hopes of more material prosperity, blessing will follow. A person should be generous, and as God blesses you, you ought to give even more.

Paul makes it clear that he is not forcing this project on the people at Corinth. He is hopeful that they will do it out of obedience to God. God loves a cheerful giver because that is precisely what God is, a cheerful giver. When God gives us our resources, God gives us more than we need, not so that we can have more, but so that we can give more to others.

- 2) Over the past four weeks we have been talking about the church in Antioch and the culture that surrounded the early church. What has surprised you or stood out to you about the church in Antioch?
- 3) How has the generosity of others, or lack of generosity, impacted your own understanding of generosity? Has there been someone in your life whose generosity has inspired you?

- 4) Both of our texts talk about giving and receiving gifts. How do you think the church in Jerusalem felt when they were sent a gift, by the church in Antioch? After all, the church had started in Jerusalem and now this new church is sending a gift to help the original believers in Jerusalem. Is it easier for you to give a gift or to receive a gift? Why?
- 5) Paul uses agricultural (sowing and reaping) imagery to talk about generosity. What do you think he is trying to communicate in verse 6? If we sow generously, or bountifully with our generosity, what will we reap, according to Paul? How should this effect our motivation to be generous?
- 6) What do you think Paul means in verse 8? What does it look like for God's grace to abound?
- 7) 2 Corinthians 9:12-15 talks about how our generosity can impact the way others respond to God. What does this kind of praise look like?

## BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) Paul talks about giving cheerfully, rather than under compulsion (2 Cor. 9:7), along with the need for obedience, as an expression of our faith in Christ (2 Cor. 9:13). He seems to be saying that our generosity is both an issue of attitude and obedience. Do you agree with this? Share a little bit about "why" you give to organizations, or charities, or the church.