



[study guide]

FRUIT OF NEW LIFE: Investor **1.27.13: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7**

[set up]

When you look at humanity, is it in our nature to be generous?

Why does it usually strike a nerve when we discuss how we use our time, talent (abilities/skills/gifts) and treasure (money/possessions/physical resources)?

What does it mean to “Invest in God’s kingdom”? Why does God, who clearly doesn’t need the resources we have, invite us to partner with Him in building His kingdom?

[digging deeper]

Read this last weekend’s teaching passage: 2 Cor. 8:1-7.

The first five verses describe the heart of giving that came from the early Christian churches in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea). Why is the Apostle Paul using them as an example and what characteristics of the Macedonian church make them a compelling and convicting model for us to follow in the giving of ourselves to God’s work?

Why is this topic ultimately a “Lordship” issue of Christ in our life? (See 2 Cor. 8:5)

Why is giving referred to as an “act of grace” (2 Cor. 8:6, 7)? Why is it easy to find ourselves often trying to, “excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you...” but avoiding, downplaying or disobeying this “act of grace”?

In 2 Cor. 8:2, the Macedonian church was said to have an “abundance of joy” in their act of giving generously. 2 Cor. 9:7 speaks of a “cheerful giver”. In Acts 20:35, we are told, “It is more blessed to give than to receive”. Let’s be real... is it really true that we can experience great joy by being generous? Do we truly experience more joy when we give of ourselves than when we receive for ourselves? How has this been true or false in your life?

The teaching passage is a portion of a larger account of the Paul encouraging the Corinthian church to participate in being generous and contributing to the work of the Lord by giving gifts to God’s work. Paul was contrasting the attitude and actions of the Macedonian churches to help spur on the more wealthy Corinthian church. Continue reading through the end of 2 Corinthians 9. What other instructions, principles, attitudes and actions do you pick up that are related to being a generous investor in God’s kingdom?

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Well known Pastor and Author, Francis Chan touches on this tender topic in his book Crazy Love. Read and discuss his observations and thoughts from pages 66-67:

Lukewarm People think about life on earth much more often than eternity in heaven. Daily life is mostly focused on today's to-do list, this week's schedule, and next month's vacation. Rarely, if ever, do they intently consider the life to come. Regarding this, C. S. Lewis writes, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this."

Lukewarm People will serve God and others, but there are limits to how far they will go or how much time, money, and energy they are willing to give.

Lukewarm People give money to charity and to the church... as long as it doesn't impinge on their standard of living. If they have a little extra and it is easy and safe to give, they do so. After all, God loves a cheerful giver, right?

Has your relationship with God actually changed the way you live? Do you see evidence of God's Kingdom in your life? Or are you choking it out slowly by spending too much time, energy, money, and thought on the things of this world?

Additional passages to read or study:

Matt. 6:19-34

Luke 6:38

Luke 16:1-13

Malachi 3:8-12

Prov. 3:9-10

Hosea 13:4-6

[living it out]

What is something new that you have learned from this time (or perhaps reminded of)?

What did God speak to you or lay on your heart during this time?

When it comes to your time, talent and treasure, which one is the easiest for you to be generous with and which one the most difficult?

I encourage you to (1) select a verse that stood out to you from this time of study, (2) write it down and (3) memorize it. If a verse doesn't come to mind, go with 2 Cor. 9:6-7 from the CVC 2013 Bible reading plan. This discipline helps cement God's Word into our heart. You can also find an accountability partner to memorize a verse and practice on each other.

You can also go online and take the "Investor" part of the "Fruit of New Life Assessment" to get a read on how you are growing in your servanthood:

<http://cvconline.org/images/uploads/DiscipleshipAssessment.pdf>



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Special closing prayer exercise (individual or as a group): Get out your Bible and open it up to 2 Cor. 8. Get your watch, wallet, calendar, smart phone (or other symbols of your time, talent and treasures) and place them on the pages. Enter into a time of surrender and prayer where you tell the Lord that you are dedicating all that He has given you, back to the investment of His kingdom. You can also write down the date and a paraphrase of your commitment or prayer in your Bible as a reminder of this moment.

[resources]

See the our fruit of new life companion resource guide for chapters and books to read more on growing as an investor for God's Kingdom

<http://cvconline.org/images/uploads/DiscipleshipAssessmentCompanionPiece.pdf>

Awesome video example of fruit that comes from struggling believers who are dedicated to generosity and a heart of kingdom investment. Well worth your 6 minutes.

<http://vimeo.com/generousgiving/review/32346180/961cfe7149>

A great read for additional study on this topic.

<http://www.kenboa.org/downloads/pdf/1-Stewardship.pdf>