**A Sermon Plan for 2 Corinthians 8: 7-15 [NIV] Excel in the Grace of Giving**

*7 But since you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+8&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-28940a)*] – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

 *8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

 *10 And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. 11 Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. 12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.*

 *13 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. 14 At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, 15 as it is written:

‘The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.’[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+8&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-28948b)*]*

**Notes**

“Excel in the Grace of Giving” is an interesting phrase. Paul makes it clear he wants the Corinthians to be good at giving, but also it is a grace. He can not compel or tell them what to do. Neither can we!

Paul points out the Corinthians are good at so many other things, and additionally, they started well, but have not maintained that generosity. There are similarities to our Anglican Giving Survey! which found that on the whole we are generous people, giving to lots of worthy charities – just not always so generously to our local church. Some of us also started well, but have neglected to increase our gift in line with inflation over the years.

Is it inappropriate to discuss giving during the cost of living crisis? Paul has covered this by citing the example of the Macedonians who gave despite their own extreme poverty (refer back to vv 2-5).

The Macedonians pleaded for the privilege of being included in the collection Paul was organising. If our senior Diocesan leadership sent an appeal letter but decided to leave our parish out, because of our own financial problems, would we insist we are given the opportunity to contribute too?

The Macedonians had a combination of joy, poverty and generosity. It’s tempting to think that poverty and generosity cannot be found together. They can. Each of us should consider prayerfully and honestly how much we should give – then give that amount, not begrudgingly, but cheerfully.

Paul finishes by quoting Exodus 16, where the Israelites were provided with manna and quail in the dessert, reminding his readers that In God’s economy, no-one gets left with too much or too little.

It also reminds them of how God has blessed them in the past. Understanding God has already blessed us is our important starting foundation as we consider how much to give. We give because He is a generous God, and in acknowledgement that everything we have comes from Him.

!: [Anglican Giving Survey 2020](https://www.newcastle.anglican.org/mission-ministry-discipleship/growing-in-faith-discipleship/generosity/anglican-giving-survey/)

**End**