

# ALL OF THE ABOVE THROUGH THE GOD OF LOVE

## "Excel! – Abundance"

January 24, 2021

**Overarching theme:** John 20:21, "21 Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' In 2021, as DISCIPLES, we are **SENT** with the peace of Christ to share with others!

P = Prayer

E = Engagement with Others

A = **Abundance**

C = Compassionate Caring

E = Evangel

### **Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

### **Core Passage:**

#### **2 Corinthians 8:1-8**

"We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; <sup>2</sup> for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup> For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, <sup>4</sup> begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints— <sup>5</sup> and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, <sup>6</sup> so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. <sup>7</sup> Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. <sup>8</sup> I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others.

### **Commentary:**

No letter of Paul's is more personal and intimate in nature than 2 Corinthians. In it he bared his soul and professed his abiding love for the Corinthians despite the apparent fickleness of their affection for him.

Paul's greatest concern was the false teachers claiming to be apostles, who had entered the church. They promoted their own ideas and at the same time sought to discredit both the person and message of the apostle. Second Corinthians was written to defend the authenticity of both his apostleship and his message. This was not carried out in a self-protecting spirit but because Paul knew that acceptance of his ministry and message were intimately bound with the Corinthians church's own spiritual well-being.

3 views as to who the opponents were:

1. Hellenistic Jews claiming to be followers of Christ, they promoted themselves as men in the line of Moses.
2. Jews of a Gnostic or Docetic stripe who rejected the earthly sufferings of Jesus in His humiliation and promoted the glory of Jesus in His exaltation as the norm of life in the world.
3. Palestinian Jews claiming to be apostles of Christ. Some feel these opponents were ostensibly concerned to bolster the position of the Jerusalem apostles, James, Peter and John. They elevated the Law and promoted allegiance to themselves as interpreters of it.
4. There is no disputing the havoc they wreaked in the Corinthians church and the heartaches they brought Paul. Though it is only in the final chapters that Paul challenged them frontally, their influence pervades the entire letter in its threefold development.

Chapters 8 and 9 concern the collection for the poor in Jerusalem. The Corinthians had initially welcomed the opportunity to participate but were failing to carry through on their commitment, possibly because Paul's opponents had intimated that he was profiting from their contributions.

In chapter 8 Paul gives the Corinthians two examples of liberality: the Macedonian churches and Christ. Macedonian churches are those in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Evidently they had nothing but possessed all that really mattered. They had learned that God's grace is sufficient to take their weaknesses and through them to display God's power. They lived in accordance with God's will.

Paul's desire was for their motivation to come from inward devotion, not external commands.

### **Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:**

1. What has been your understanding and attitude towards discipleship? Have you thought of it as something that happens by itself if one believes in Jesus without commitment to follow him, in learning from him through God's word and becoming more like him? Have you been disappointed or frustrated in your discipleship of Christ as you face struggles and difficulties in life?

2. What prevents you from giving abundantly? What trials are you going through that might prohibit you from being as generous as you would like to be? What teachings do you hear that seem to contradict what scripture seems to teach?
3. When is the last time that you “begged” for the opportunity to return back to God for his work? What kinds of things do you beg for?
4. How would becoming an “abundant” giver help you in your spiritual growth of being transformed in heart and mind? Are you a Romans 12: 1, 2 disciple? *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*  
If yes, how could it improve and if no, would you consider?
5. When your days are over, what will you have invested in that will bring thanksgiving, glory and praise to God? How does that make you feel?
6. How are you progressing so far in your personal PEACE plan? How is your prayer life; are you engaged or connected to other Christians where you are encouraged to grow; where are you in your returning back to God from all that he has blessed you with – where would you ultimately like to get to; how are you serving and sharing the peace of Christ with “your” world? Do you get up daily and invite God to open your eyes to opportunities to share the Good News with someone else? Remember, you may be the only bible someone every reads!

**Activity for the life of a disciple (a fully devoted follower of Christ):**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional and spend time pondering and meditating on the challenge.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: 2 Corinthians 8:7 NIV  
*“But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.”*
3. Prayerfully approach God asking for a deeper and more meaningful spiritual life which involves experiencing the riches of God’s grace in Christ, knowing who he is and what he offers, and for guidance in sharing this transformation with others.