

## Unit III: The Church and Its Teachings

# Values, Money, and Experiences

DEVOTIONAL READING: Zechariah 8:18-23

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 8:17-18; Jonah 3:1-10; Malachi 3:7-12; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:6-8; 13:1-3; 26:12-20; Romans 1:14-16; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:1-15

PRINT PASSAGES: Acts 1:6-8; 2 Corinthians 8:3-9

### KEY VERSE

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9, KJV)

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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. (2 Corinthians 8:9, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Explore your congregation's mission statement in consideration of Jesus' Great Commission.
- Nurture an attitude of generosity toward others.
- Fulfill the Great Commission.

### \*Key Terms

**Authority (Acts 1:7)**—Greek: *exousia* (ex-oo-see'-ah): "power" (KJV) to act; right; jurisdiction.

**Power (Acts 1:8)**—Greek: *dunamis* (doo'-namis): (miraculous) might; strength; ability; force.

**Restore (Acts 1:6)**—Greek: *apokathistémi* (apok-ath-is'-tay-mee): to reestablish; to return to a former state; reconstitute.

**Service (2 Corinthians 8:4)**—Greek: *diakonia* (dee-ak-on-ee'-ah): ministry; office; relief; support; "ministering" (KJV).

**Testify (2 Corinthians 8:3)**—Greek: *martureó* (mar-too-reh'-o): to bear witness, give evidence; give testimony; "bear record" (KJV).

**Witnesses (Acts 1:8)**—Greek: *martus* (mar'-toos): martyrs; records; spectators of anything.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



## The Biblical Context

The biblical and theological contexts for this week's lesson illustrate the relationship between mission and stewardship. The book of Acts, Luke's second letter to Theophilus, provides an orderly account of the early church's development. The immediate context of Acts 1:6-8 is Luke's expanded account of Jesus' ascension from Bethany. Here, Jesus prepared to depart, giving His disciples final instructions concerning God's kingdom and directing them to remain in Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:1-5). After reorienting their focus away from political expectations, Jesus promises the disciples the Holy Spirit's empowerment, and expands His mission-al mandate for the church (see Matthew 28:19-20), emphasizing Spirit-empowered, global evangelism (Acts 1:8).

In contrast, while Acts 1 centers on mission, the biblical and theological context of 2 Corinthians 8 centers on stewardship. In this chapter, Paul, who had contributed to fulfilling the Great Commission by establishing and ministering to churches across the eastern Roman Empire, urged the Corinthian believers to honor their stewardship commitment by giving generously. Their support was especially needed to aid impoverished congregations, notably the Macedonian churches, whose sacrificial generosity was motivated by Christ's self-giving love.

## Introduction

Christian mission and stewardship are essential and connected parts of what God expects from the church. In the Bible, mission is the task God gave the church to share the good news of salvation, help others grow in faith, and live in a way that reflects Jesus' character. Jesus' clear command, known as the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), sets the foundation for mission and explains the church's purpose in the world. This command is not optional—it gives the church its reason for existing, supports God's saving plan, and applies to every believer today.

While mission establishes the church's purpose, stewardship provides the essential means by which that mission is sustained and accomplished. Stewardship answers the critical question, "How can we fulfill the Great Commission?" Biblically, Christian stewardship refers to the responsibility God has entrusted believers to manage all He has placed under their care, serving as a defining aspect of humanity's relationship with Him. Since salvation is His gracious gift to humanity through faith in Jesus Christ, believers must manage it faithfully and responsibly. Therefore, the faithful and intentional stewardship of one's time, spiritual gifts, talents, and material possessions constitutes a vital expression of obedience to Christ's mandate to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all He has commanded.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### The Call to Mission (Acts 1:6-8)

#### KJV

**6** When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

**7** And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

**8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**

**NIV**

**6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”**

**7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.**

**8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

These verses record Jesus’ final instructions to His disciples before His ascension. After commanding them to remain in Jerusalem and await the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the disciples immediately associated this event with the coming of the promised kingdom. They concluded that Israel’s national restoration was near (verse 6). Jesus’ response in verse 7 redirects their focus but does not suggest that their understanding of the kingdom itself was wrong. After all, He had taught them about the coming of an earthly kingdom. His purpose here was to inform them that it was not for them to know the exact timing or duration of this critical period, which the Father had established by His authority. Instead, Jesus pointed them to their immediate responsibility: to be His witnesses “to the ends of the earth” after receiving supernatural empowerment from the Holy Spirit (verse 8). In this statement, Jesus restated and expanded the Great Commission, delivering His Spirit-empowered, global missional directive to the church.

As His delegated witnesses, the disciples were charged with going out into the world, proclaiming the Gospel to make disciples, baptizing those who accepted its message as a visible sign of their inclusion in the church, and teaching them to obey all He commanded. This missional mandate remains every believer’s non-negotiable task today. It provides purpose and direction, calling believers to fulfill it without distraction or hesitation and without allowing social, ethnic, or cultural boundaries to hinder their obedience. The mission begins at home and extends outward to every sphere of influence that God entrusts to them.

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Why is Spirit empowerment vital for fulfilling the church’s missional mandate?

## **The Call to Stewardship (2 Corinthians 8:3-9)**

**KJV**

**3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;**

**4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.**

**5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.**

**6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.**

**7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.**

**8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.**

**9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.**

## **NIV**

**3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,**

**4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.**

**5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.**

**6 So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.**

**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—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.**

After confronting the Corinthians about their failures and defending his authority as an apostle, Paul shifts focus in chapter 8 to a new topic—the collection for suffering Christians in Jerusalem. Though the Corinthians had agreed to help a year earlier, tensions with Paul had delayed their follow-through. Paul began by pointing to the generosity of the Macedonian churches. Even though they were very poor, they gave freely and even begged to be part of helping the Jerusalem believers (verses 3-4). What stood out most to Paul was that the Macedonians went beyond expectations. First, they gave themselves to the Lord, and then to Paul, recognizing God's authority and Paul's role as God's servant (verse 5). Because of this, Paul asked Titus, who had earlier helped start the collection, to encourage the Corinthians to complete what they had started and to grow in their giving just as they had in other areas of faith (verses 6-7). Paul calls giving an act of grace, showing it is more than a duty; it is a spiritual gift and a sign of true inner commitment to God.

In verse 8, Paul urged the Corinthians to treat this appeal as a chance to prove their love and commitment to others, just like the Macedonians had done. He reinforces his message by pointing to

Christ's great act of love and the price He paid to save humanity as the highest example of generosity (verse 9). Christ willingly gave up His heavenly privileges and became "poor" through the Incarnation so that, by faith, believers could become spiritually "rich" and receive eternal life. In the same way, believers are called to give generously, showing their dedication to making disciples and spreading the Gospel worldwide.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In what practical ways can the church demonstrate sacrificial generosity to support the Great Commission's mandate?

## A Closing Thought

Mission and stewardship are key parts of how the church functions. These two connected responsibilities belong to every member and reflect the church's true identity and purpose. Jesus commanded His followers to go into the world, share the Gospel, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey His commands. This mission is the church's core calling and lines up with God's plan to save the world. Mission gives the church its purpose, while stewardship supplies the resources. By giving generously—through money, time, skills, relationships, and spiritual gifts—believers help grow God's kingdom and reflect Christ's sacrificial love that brings salvation.

## Your Life

The Great Commission and the responsible stewardship of time, talents, and treasure provide the framework and foundation for the church's purpose in the world, while answering the question many often ask: "What is there for me to do as a church member?" Christ's command to make disciples and His expectation that believers support this mission through generous and sacrificial giving apply to every believer without exception. Therefore, evaluate how faithfully you are fulfilling your responsibility to assist your congregation in carrying out these non-negotiable, God-given tasks, and commit to making necessary adjustments to honor your calling and strengthen the church's witness to the world.

## Your World!

Christ's mandate to make disciples and be His witnesses in the world challenges the church to avoid discriminatory evangelism, internally and externally. Christ's selfless giving of Himself to save all humanity sets an example to follow. Just as He, though rich with a heavenly mission, became poor by giving them up to make salvation available for all humankind, so must we allow His sacrificial love to inform inclusive evangelism as we implement His missional mandate, disregarding race, color, or creed while supporting it with Christian stewardship motivated by selfless, humble hearts fully committed to Him.

