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Title: Choose Your Model

Text: II Corinthians 8:1-5

Date: January 27, 2013

Place: Decatur Church of God

\*Read the laminated card “Stewardship is a Choice.”

In II Cor. 8:1-5, the churches in Macedonia set for us a good model: a church model.

\*Calvin Coolidge said, “No enterprise can exist for itself alone. It ministers to some great need, it performs some great service, not for itself, but for others; or failing therein it ceases to be profitable and ceases to exist.

In II Corinthians Paul is writing about a congregation that models good stewardship for us.

Text: *II Corinthians 8:1-5*

Paul had written to the churches about helping some needy congregations in the area of Judea. That’s the background for this scripture.

When Paul first came into contact with these people, he was following the vision, which we refer to as the Macedonian call. He came because he heard a cry for help.

What a beautiful picture. The fledgling church grows into maturity. It leaves its immaturity behind and moves from being a taker to becoming a giver.

We only grow, we only are blessed, and we only are prosperous so that we can pass it on to others, so that we can keep giving. **THE GREATNESS OF A CHURCH IS NOT IN WHAT IT RECEIVES—THE GREATNESS OF A CHURCH IS IN WHAT IT GIVES!**

We are not a “Savings and Loan” institution, we are a church. If you are selfish, you might want to look for another church because the Decatur Church of God is a giving church.

## **I. Some Outstanding Facts about the Macedonian Churches:**

1. (vs. 2) They gave out of much affliction.
  - a. Paul said, “a great trial of affliction.”
2. (vs. 2) They gave out of deep poverty.
  - a. Overflowed wealth and liberality.
3. (vs. 3) They gave beyond their own ability.
  - a. Not only according to their ability—they gave beyond their ability.
4. (vs. 3) They gave willingly.
5. (vs. 4) They viewed giving as a privilege.
  - a. They begged Paul for the opportunity to give.
6. (vs. 5) They first of all gave themselves to the Lord.

From these six outstanding facts, we can put together a stewardship formula. A formula we can apply to our lives.

The Macedonian churches had the right attitude, which produced in them the right action that provided God’s blessings in their lives.

## **II. The Right Attitude**

- A. Giving is a matter of Priorities, not a matter of problems (vs. 2).
  - a. They gave not according to their personal problems but according to their priorities.

- b. It is easy for us to see our own personal problems or our own collective, Decatur Church of God, problems and allow those problems to keep us from being the great stewards that God wants us to be.

\*People who have so many personal problems—“I just can’t help anyone else.”

- c. We will always have problems.

\*How many have at least one, right now?

- d. The day that we allow our problems to control our stewardship is the day that we begin to limit ourselves:
  - i. In ministry
  - ii. In personal growth
  - iii. In God’s blessings

B. Giving is a matter of willingness, not a matter of wealth (vs. 2).

- a. A willing attitude, not wealth.
- b. Stewardship has nothing to do with wealth.
- c. God is not interested in what you have. God is interested in what you do with what you have.

\*Reflect for a moment on last Sunday’s message:

Little with little  
 Little with much  
 Much with little  
 Much with much

\*“If God would give me a million bucks, I’d give Him half of it.”

“If you had \$500,000 would you give half of it to God?”

“Yes.”

“If you had 1,000 cows, would you give half of them?”

“Oh, yes Pastor.”

“If you had 500 cows, would you give half of them to God?”

“Yes I would!”

“If you had two hogs, would you give half of them to God?”

“Hold on now Pastor! You know I got two hogs...Let’s not get personal about this!”

Giving has everything to do with a willing heart not a wealthy pocketbook.

God is concerned with your little or your much.

If you have a million dollars—wonderful, wonderful, wonderful—God has a question for you. What are you doing with your possessions?

If you are poor—wonderful, wonderful, (well...not wonderful, wonderful, maybe just one wonderful). But God wants to know what you are doing with what you have.

- d. It was out of their deep poverty that they overflowed in wealth.
- C. Giving is a matter of opportunity, not a matter of obligation (vs. 4).
- a. They were begging for the opportunity to participate in ministering to the saints.
  - b. This must have been a “spiritual” church. They were begging Paul: “Please let us give some money.”

\*Decatur Church of God is a giving congregation, but I will admit, as your pastor, I have never had you...never had you beg me to pass the plate one more time. “Oh, Pastor, we are not going to leave until you take up another offering.”

That would be a good way to give your pastoral staff a corporate heart attack.

- c. They didn't have resources and they were begging to give resources.
- d. I don't care what you would give, if you had the resources. I care about what you are doing with what you have right now!
- e. Poor people begging to give!!!

### III. The Right Action

- A. They first gave themselves to the Lord. (vs. 5) they settled the issue of Lordship.
  - a. When you settle who is #1 in your life, then the issue of stewardship becomes automatic.
  - b. Try to be a good steward without accepting the Lordship of Christ—They're just nickel and diming the kingdom to death. (Miserable the whole time)

\*Some people look at stewardship like paying taxes.

- c. God wants **YOU!**

\*Don't you love people? “Do I tithe on the net or the gross?”

That's like me looking at Debbie and asking how many times I should say “I love you” to make our marriage acceptable. What's the minimum?

The people who quibble over the minimum limit are the ones who have never made Jesus #1 in their life.

B. They gave themselves to us (Paul and the other ministers – vs. 5). They settled the issue of leadership.

a. They gave according to their leadership.

C. They gave according to their ability (vs. 3).

a. They settled the issue of love.

\*The Macedonian churches gave themselves to God, to their church leadership, and experienced a baptism of love. When they settled those issues, some exciting things started to happen.

#### **IV. Notice God's Blessings**

A. Vs. 1 – The grace of God was given to them.

a. Because you are this way, God's grace has begun to be made manifest upon you.

B. Vs. 3 – The ability to give beyond their resources.

a. Beyond their ability.

i. How can you do this?

ii. How can you give more than you are able?

iii. How can you give beyond you ability?

iv. How can you be more than you are able to be?

b. Our part is to do according to the best we have.

#### ***Romans 12:1***

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

c. That's when God puts his hand in and does miracles with your best.

\*The feeding of the 5,000 is a great Bible story. Do you realize that the same God who works over there, works over here.

**Conclusion:** Doris (a poor lady) gave a \$3.30 offering for a special need. (That is all I have.)

Pastor shared with the congregation that night (truly the widow's mites).

One man stood and said, "Pastor, I'll give you \$10 for one penny of that offering."

Then another member stood, and another.

Soon that \$3.30 offering became a 3,300 offering.

Let me share with you the steps of a successful steward: CHOICE (vs. 6), CHEERFULNESS (vs. 7), COMPLETENESS (vs. 8), and CONTENTMENT (vss. 12-14).

-Giving does something for others

\*Fully supplies their needs

\*Makes them thankful

-Giving does something for us

\*Proof of our Christian profession

\*Keeps us supplied with God's blessings

\*Allows others to love us

-Giving does something for God

\*He is glorified

The Macedonian churches gave beyond their ability. They had the right attitude, took the right action and God blessed them.

Stewardship is a choice. Choose your model?