Act of Grace; 2 Corinthians 8:1-6

1. Generosity
   1. 2 Corinthians 8:1–2 (ESV) 1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.
   2. Simple goodness, which gives itself without reserve, ‘without strings attached’, ‘without hidden agendas’ [[1]](#footnote-1)
   3. “White Christmas” – everyone has an angle
   4. Luke 14:13–14 (ESV) 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”
   5. Jesus, knowing that few would enter the narrow gate, still sacrificed Himself for us – that is the kind of generosity, the giving without reserve, no strings attached, we need to show others
2. Of Their Own Accord
   1. 2 Corinthians 8:3–5 (ESV) 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.
   2. Our giving is often brought upon us by outside pressures
      1. When we are approached by someone in need
      2. When we receive a phone call from an organization
      3. When hearing a lesson on giving at worship
   3. Rarely do we see a need and act on it
      1. This is exactly why Paul is commending in the Macedonian churches
      2. It seems to me that Paul actually spoke against such liberal giving because of their poverty
      3. But they were ‘begging earnestly’ – pleading, asking many, many times (very rarely do we beg to give)
   4. Paul may be contrasting the procrastination of the church in Corinth with the proactive stance of the churches in Macedonia
   5. Paul calls this an ‘act of grace’
   6. We have (or have we) given ourselves to the Lord – this requires a change in our thinking, especially about our belongings
   7. Luke 14:33 (ESV) 33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.
      1. Everything we have should be dedicated to God – should be used in service to Him
      2. We have to recognize that all we have comes from God (and He can easily take it away, remember Job)
   8. As Christians, we ought to be looking for ways to help others, not waiting for them to come asking
      1. You may be saying to yourselves, “I don’t have anything to spare”
      2. Malachi 3:10 (ESV) 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.
      3. Luke 6:37–38 (ESV) 37 “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”
      4. This is not ‘name it and claim it’; instead, this is ‘use what God has given you in service to Him in His Kingdom’
   9. We must become the kind of people that ‘give of our own accord’
3. Genuine Love
   1. Paul calls this giving “proof of love”
   2. 2 Corinthians 8:8 (ESV) 8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.
   3. Jesus gave us proof of love
   4. 2 Corinthians 8:9 (ESV) 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 by his poverty might become rich.
      1. “The riches of Christ are those riches which pertained to his status with God and equality to God before the world was ([John 17:5](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=John+17:5&t1=en_nas)), the riches of His eternal power and Godhead, the riches of His everlasting divinity and glory. Only such an explanation as this can pertain to Paul's words here.” [[2]](#footnote-2)
      2. John 17:5 (ESV) 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.
      3. Even as God, Himself, Jesus (as a man) could not grasp equality with God as something to be grasped (Philippians 2)
      4. He left the Glory of Heaven for pain and suffering, for mocking and death, all for us – proof of love!
   5. The idea behind ‘generosity’ (no strings attached) comes to mind when I read and think about genuine love
   6. We give because there is a need, not because we want the kudos from our local community, or because we want to get to heaven
   7. Just as we love because God loved us first; we give because God gave to us first
4. Act of Grace
   1. We are a generous people – without ulterior motive, no strings attached
   2. We look for ways to be generous with our time and resources
   3. We show genuine love (Just as Jesus did) through our generosity – our ‘acts of grace’

1. William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bdag?ref=Page.p+104&off=1911&ctx=%2c+1925%2c+450%E2%80%9353).%E2%80%94Of+~simple+goodness%2c+whi) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on [2 Corinthians 8:9](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=2%20Corinthians+8:4&t1=en_nas) ". "Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament". https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/2-corinthians-8.html. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)