

## ***Fields of Gold: Life Group Study 2 In Light of Eternity***



### **Intro:**

It is fairly common to read about the billionaires who give large portions of their fortunes to benevolent causes around the globe. And, most of the time, it can be inspiring to learn about the causes people like Bill Gates and Warren Buffett are supporting: the eradication of AIDS and other diseases, providing education to impoverished children, ending slavery and a host of other wonderful endeavors. Of course, we are quick to point out that it must be easy to give millions when you have billions. Nevertheless, their generous acts can cause us to consider, “What if ...?” Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions with your group:

- What if you were a billionaire? What good things would you choose to do with your money?
- What if you were chosen to be the person who chooses the causes the Bill Gates Foundation supports? What are the causes on which you’d spend Bill’s money?
- What if you were chosen to steward God’s resources and to distribute them to aid in the causes close to his heart? What are the causes on which you’d disperse the Master’s money?

We’re going to take a look at one particular church in the New Testament that took its responsibility in this regard very seriously. And, we’ll learn how we can follow their example.

### **Bible study:**

Church today looks quite a bit different than it did in biblical times. We worship in nice buildings with highly organized services; they typically met as small groups in homes. In many cases, the gospel was about the only thing they held in common. These churches are remembered for different reasons: some good, some bad. For example, we remember the Ephesian church for its hard work and the Corinthian church for its divisions and moral issues.

The small church in Philippi is remembered for its generosity. Again and again, the Philippian church provided for the work of the gospel in hours of great need. These individuals paint a stunning portrait of compassion and generosity. When we read the book of Philippians, remember we are reading Paul’s personal correspondence to the small group of believers that financially supported the ministry.

Read Philippians 4:10-20

1. Notice vv. 10 and 16; the Philippian church has a pattern of giving. What motivated them to repeatedly send gifts to Paul?
2. A dangerous lie has filtered into churches. Sometimes we think of God’s blessing in terms of what we *have*. Paul however, has a different message. His is a message of contentment. What is the source of his contentment? Why is this thinking so radically different and important?

3. The Philippian churches supplied all of Paul's needs and then some! Were they simply giving to the traveling preacher? Read v. 18 again. What does Paul have to say about their gift? Have you ever viewed your giving in such a way?
4. On several occasions in the Old Testament, we read of sacrifices being rejected (e.g. Isa 1:11); why is this one so different?
5. Giving can be scary at first! What is the source of Paul's assurance their needs will be met?

Philippi is located in the region of Macedonia. When Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, he mentioned Macedonia. It's almost certain he is referring to the Philippian church.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

1. How does Paul describe these believers' financial situation?
2. It's true they had little money—what did they have in abundance? How was this expressed?
3. They *begged* Paul for the privilege of *sharing*. The word translated 'sharing' (NLT, NIV) is a technical term from business documents in Paul's day. It conveyed the idea of a partnership. Why would they consider partnering with the Jerusalem churches such an incredible privilege?

#### **Application:**

1. What is scarier—not having enough or having God involved in your finances? Why?

Generosity flows from the heart filled with gospel enthusiasm. It's natural. When we're enthralled by God's saving work on our behalf, generosity happens. Our message, time, and resources are all opportunities to share with others about our amazing God. He's done so much on our behalf and we long for others to know this same joy. We desire to see the gospel message flood our community and spread throughout the world. God has chosen to work primarily through the church and our giving is a tangible way to share in His work and the world's need.

1. How do you balance a desire to save for the future and yet provide for needs? Can you?
2. Oftentimes we give out of a sense of duty or obligation. Does the Philippian church challenge your motivations for giving? See 2 Corinthians 9:7.
3. The Philippians were so excited about the work of missions they repeatedly looked for Paul to provide for his needs (see Phil 4:16). How do we duplicate this sort of excitement and commitment in our lives?
4. Take time to pray as a group. Ask God to do something spectacular through your giving and to challenge each of us to give from joyful hearts rather than obligation.