

Women's Bible Study – Spring 2008

SHARED LIVES

Shared Resources: How to Give With an Open Heart

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Gretchen Steer



In January I received a letter from the Police Department in Wahpeton, ND. It stated that my van had been ticketed on a certain date in November, and that I was now to pay up that unpaid ticket. I just laughed. Obviously, it was a case of mistaken identity. I don't even know where Wahpeton is, and I haven't been to North Dakota since 1995. But there was a creepy accuracy about the description of my car and license plate. I walked down to the garage. Yep, it was my license plate number. Then I checked the calendar. Not guilty...I was teaching Bible study that day, morning and evening. Surely even a fast driver like me couldn't make it to North Dakota and back between morning and evening Bible study without someone noticing my absence.

So I called up the nice folks in Wahpeton. The police officer laughed when I insisted my car hadn't been there. She asked me a few questions about where my college age children were on that date (safely in Arizona and Pennsylvania, to my knowledge) and then said that the booking officer hadn't been sure of the number because it was obscured by mud. She told me to tear up the ticket and apologized for the mistake. So was I just the victim of a revenue raising operation on the part of the Wahpeton police department? I'll never know. And if I do go there, I'm taking John's car!

But how do you feel when you're being asked to pay up for something that you don't think concerns you? I raise development funds as part of my job. And I've spent most of my adult life in non profit organizations whose income comes from donations. When people receive a fundraising appeal, do they feel like I did when the Wahpeton Police Dept. asked me for money?

It's important that we understand what God means when he asks us to give. If we are in a right relationship with him, we'll feel cheerful about giving, not manipulated and angry. And when we give, we will discover the immense and freeing joy that comes from holding our possessions very, very lightly, remembering that all we have comes from our Father in heaven.

So I'm delighted to be able to talk about *Shared Resources* today, from 2nd Corinthians chapters 8 and 9. So please turn with me to 2nd Corinthians 8 verse 1, where we will first fill in the back story.

“And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.” (2nd Cor. 8:1-4)

Paul is writing to the Corinthian church. But in the passage we just read, he is referring to the Macedonian churches – the churches at Philippi, Berea and Thessalonika, churches we know from the books of Philippians, Acts and 1st and 2nd Thessalonians. These were poor churches, and yet Paul says that they gave out of their “extreme poverty.” Not only that, but nobody had to have a fundraising campaign. They pleaded for the chance to give.

Now what exactly was the big need? The church in Jerusalem was fairly desperate, and the outlying churches (to which Paul had been sent as a missionary) had agreed to send a gift to support the Jerusalem church since they had incurred the expense of sending out Paul. In return, once these mission churches got on their feet, so to speak, they were to return the favor by sending a gift of money to Jerusalem to help the believers there. There was a widespread famine in the Jerusalem region during these years. The core of this church was the 5,000 original converts from the day of Pentecost, who may have ended up staying in the city and having to find housing or a new trade rather than go back home now that they were Christians. They were continually oppressed and taxed by the Romans. It was tough being a Christian in Jerusalem, and that’s why the other churches needed to send them money.

This was a mechanism that had been set in place some ten to fifteen years before (Paul refers to it in retrospect in Acts 24:17.) And now it was coming due. Philippi and Thessalonika were willing – no one had to ask them twice – but the church at Corinth was dragging its feet. The Corinthian church had received very clear teaching from Paul on the subject when he wrote in 1st Corinthians 16:2 “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income...” In other words, they were to give weekly, instead of having to pay up all at once when Titus arrived to collect the gift.

Now this discussion of giving is not just an historical account. Paul is teaching us about giving as well in these two chapters. So the first question Paul answers is the important one:

I. Why Give?

Paul’s first reason is

A. Because you’ve already given yourself to God (8:5)

“And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will.” (2nd Cor. 8:5)

In the end this is the ONLY motive that will keep us giving consistently and joyfully. If we have first given ourselves to God, then he owns all of us – our material resources as well as our time and our allegiance. It’s a small thing, after making him Lord of our lives, to then make him Lord of our finances. But if he doesn’t have all of us, then we’ll give grudgingly, resenting that we have to spend on God what we could instead be spending on ourselves. So the first, and most important reason to give, is that it’s the natural outcome of already giving yourself to God.

Paul gives another answer to the question, “Why give?”

B. Because it is an Act of Grace (8:6)

“So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.” (2nd Cor. 8:6)

Titus had been involved in the previous year's collection, the one that was supposed to have been finished and sent to Jerusalem. But look beyond the Corinthians to the theological underpinnings. Paul calls giving: "an act of grace". We ourselves have received grace – the free, unmerited favor of God. We're used to receiving. But it's not very often that we can give back or DO something that is an act of grace. By giving, then, we are able to participate in an act that imitates the grace that was shown to us. It's like forgiving someone because we have been forgiven by God. When we give, we are extending to others the grace that was shown to us. It's both our privilege and our responsibility to give.

Now just as an aside, can we substitute one kind of giving (Christian service) for the giving of money or possessions? I don't think we can, because we are called to both give AND to serve. Service does not give us a free pass on giving, and giving doesn't give us a free pass on serving. In the body of Christ, we are to do both. So giving is an act of grace that we can't afford to pass up.

Paul gives a third reason to give:

C. It follows Christ's example (8:9)

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2nd Cor. 8:9)

To understand what Paul means by Jesus becoming poor, we need to look at Philippians 2 v. 5:

**"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
Did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
But made himself nothing,
Taking the very nature of a servant,
Being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
And gave him the name that is above every name,
That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." (Philippians 2:5-10)**

What an example. If we had that position, the rights and privileges of God who pre-existed before the world was made, would we give it up so that others might join us in heaven? Understand that Paul is not speaking about the material poverty of Jesus. While he wasn't rich in this life, neither was Jesus as impoverished as others. He had a trade; he had a family. And when he had nowhere to lay his head it was because he'd chosen to go on the road and teach about God. No, Jesus' poverty in this verse refers to him shedding off the majesty of heaven and the power of God, stooping to live like a human with all the temptations and miseries we share. Without the glory of heaven and legions of angels Jesus knew what it was to be hungry, to be tired, to be tempted. Yet he remained obedient to his Father. And by that voluntary spiritual poverty, by setting aside his kingdom, he achieved for us all the riches of heaven that we inherit when we come into eternal life.

Some of you have read O.E. Rolvaag's great book about Norwegian immigrants in the 19th century called *Giants in the Earth*. Ole Edvart Rolvaag was born in Norway, into a community where

everyone fished. From the time he was 15 he went out with the fleet under the instruction of a master fisherman. Yet his spirit yearned for something different. When he was 20 he received a ticket for a ship's passage to America from his uncle in South Dakota. At that same time, his fishing master took him to the summer boat fair in Bjorn. The master showed him the finest boat for sale, and said, "If you will send back that ticket to your uncle, I will buy this boat for you. And when she has paid for herself she shall be yours." Suddenly Rolvaag was thrown into a turmoil – to be offered the very best that Norway could provide, vs. the unknown hardships of America. He wrestled with the offer all afternoon on a hillside above town. In the evening he found his master and said, "I am sorry. But I cannot accept your offer. I am going to America." (from Lincoln Concord's forward to *Giants in the Earth*, O.E. Rolvaag, pg. xxi). Leaving the known and familiar, the sure thing, for what God has for us in an unpredictable future, can open up vast possibilities. In Norway, Rolvaag had been to school for 9 weeks a year, for only seven years. In America, this self educated immigrant was able to become the Chair of Norwegian Literature at St. Olaf College and wrote the definitive novel of Norwegian immigration. He gave up material security, and ended up finding his life's work.

Jesus has set the example for us by giving up his majesty, taking on poverty, so that we might become spiritually rich. Should we not give up some of our abundance so that others might have a better life too?

Paul gives a fourth reason to give:

D. We all need help sometime (8:13-15)

"Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will be equality, as it is written: 'He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little.'" (2nd Cor. 8: 13-15)

Paul is not suggesting that we become socialists. This is not an exercise to force us to give up what we have. Rather, he's reminding us that sometimes we will be giving and other times we will be receiving. He refers to the manna falling in the desert when he quotes "He who gathered much did not have too much..." (Exodus 16:18). God knows how to supply just what we need, and we are part of that supply and demand for the body of Christ.

So there are four reasons to give. The next section of chapter 8 addresses an important question:

II. How Should We Handle Money?

Paul explains in chapter 8:16-24 that he plans to send the gift of money collected from the Corinthians back to Jerusalem with Titus and two other men. With each of these men Paul gives their credentials ("the brother who was praised by all the churches") ("Titus...my partner and fellow worker among you...") so that the church will know they are sending their money with trustworthy people. In this next section we see three good ways to handle money.

The first is

A. With integrity (8:20-21)

“We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.” (2nd Cor. 8:20-21)

Any one who works in a non profit organization realizes that handling money with integrity is crucial. Who wants to give money to a group that mishandles funds? At church or at my job there are many careful safeguards in place so that all money coming in is accounted for and used wisely. For example, in the early days of my work I sometimes had to handle cash receipts from an event. There was an ironclad rule that at least two people always had to count the money together so that no cash went astray. Notice how Paul uses that same sort of accountability and public handling of the money so that no question arises about how it’s used.

Money is a touchy subject, and if there was any hint that this “liberal gift” was going to Paul himself, he wanted to make sure the rumor was squelched and disarmed right away by the open and ethical way that the gift was collected, transported and administered. How criminal would that be – to raise money from the impoverished congregations in Macedonia and then siphon it off for Paul’s use? Paul says he takes pains to do what is right in God’s eyes as well as men’s eyes. Anytime we handle money, especially someone else’s money, we need to do it with integrity.

We also need to handle money

B. As an example (8:24)

“Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.” (2nd Cor. 8:24)

The value of handling money openly and carefully means that Corinth could set a good example for other churches. The Corinthians had a pretty poor track record – open sin, disagreements, false teachers – they may have had a bit of a reputation in the early church world as being sinful. And Paul wants them to rise above their embarrassing past and set an example in doing good. Notice, though, that while Paul is encouraging them in this area, he is not commanding them. He says this plainly in verse 8: **“I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it to the earnestness of others.” (2 Cor. 8:8)** Paul is setting them a challenge and encouraging them to rise to it. He wants them to be an example.

So we handle money with integrity, as an example for others, and finally:

C. With an open hand (9:6-7)

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

These verses are always quoted in sermons about giving, so much so that we might feel we can safely ignore them. They are also sometimes wrenched out of context to support the health and wealth gospel – the idea that if only we give, we’ll be rich! Take a closer look, though. Paul is stating a well known principle of farming. If you sow a lot, you’ll reap a lot. And if we give generously, open heartedly, of ourselves, our time and our resources, we will receive a lot in return. It may not be much materially, but we will surely receive lots of love, and joy, and fulfillment. If we give resentfully, out of a sense of duty, we will feel about as joyful as we do when we’re paying

property taxes. We know that, in a sense, taxes are paid under compulsion. Even if we agree wholeheartedly with the use of our tax money, it's human nature to think of 10,000 different (and seemingly better) uses we could put that money to if we did not have to pay up. But we also know that if we don't pay our property tax, we might end up in prison. Taxes are paid, therefore, under compulsion. But giving should not be. On the contrary. When we give we need to give ourselves first to Christ, then decide what we will give, then cheerfully give what we've promised.

The next section deals with the question

III. What Happens When We Give?

First,

A. It teaches us generosity (9:11)

“You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.” (2nd Cor. 9:11)

I don't think it's very easy to learn generosity unless we try it a few times. Only then we will realize the joy that comes from doing the right thing.

Second,

B It causes thanks to God (9:12)

“This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.” (2nd Cor. 9:12)

Again, the point of giving is two fold. It helps others and it is a way to thank God for what we have received. You might be familiar with the old table grace, “For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful.” We will be a lot more thankful for what we have if we start by giving some of it away. The thankfulness follows on the heels of the giving.

Third,

C. It brings God glory and validates our faith (9:13)

“Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.” (2nd Cor. 9:13)

You and I know that words are always more believable when they are accompanied by action. And this verse brings up an interesting question, which is how will people know our motive for giving, unless we identify ourselves as the givers? And how does telling people that you give tie into Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount, where he said, **“Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men...But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:1-4)**

There are two ways to look at this. One that Paul himself uses examples from real life (and often from his own) to let people know that what he is saying is true and actionable by real live humans.

If he can do it, we can do it. In that sense, 2nd Cor. 9:13 would seem to indicate that God actually gets glory from our generosity, AND the practical application of giving makes our faith believable to onlookers.

But Paul is more likely referring to the church collectively, and saying that by their obedience *as a church* in giving God is glorified. This is what happens when the church gives above and beyond our budget to help those in Darfur, or build a house for Rochester Network for ReEntry. Anyone can look on and see that we as a church are doing these things for the glory of God. But think about it. They can also look on and observe that we're behind on our regular budget. What does that say about our obedience to God through giving? It might undercut the reality of our faith in the eyes of unbelievers.

Finally,

D. Giving draws men to God (9:14)

“And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” (2nd Cor. 9:14-15)

This verse goes back to the ideas that actions speak louder than words, and that giving is an act of grace. Onlookers become curious about our love for God that extends even to our giving. And then they come to know the God who provides us with his greatest gift of all – Jesus Christ.

We've had a chance to think about what these two chapters are saying. I think the message is pretty inescapable. If we are Christians, we are to give materially back to God. No way around it. Even the widow with two small coins gave all that she had. But because we come from a culture that does not teach us how to manage money, I want to end with three suggestions that answer the general question,

IV. How Can We Afford to Give?

Let me say, you can't afford NOT to give. Although there is a spiritual gift of giving, and some of you have it, giving is also a command. [Acts 20:35; Romans 12:13] Whether or not we are naturally good at giving, we are still commanded to give, and we are particularly commanded to look after the poor and alien in our midst, which requires – of course! - giving. I think that is a command that we ignore at our peril. So giving is serious business. But most of us have grown up in a culture of credit card debt, spending what we earn and saving nothing. How can a person who spends her paycheck every month afford to give? You can't. So here are some practical suggestions which answer the question, “How can we afford to give?”

1. By planning to give, and keeping our word.

Did you notice that the Corinthians had promised to take part in this collection for Jerusalem, and then hadn't kept their promise? There is a real sense of judgment that hangs over promise breakers – both a sense of shame from God, who calls us to honesty in what we say and asks us to keep our word – and a sense of not being taken seriously by those around us. Integrity and character have a lot to do with promise keeping.

So I would suggest that if you have made a commitment to give, for example in supporting the church's building program, keep that promise. I know from my professional life that both banks

and accountants take a very close look at financial pledges. Depending upon the organization's track record they may or may not treat those pledges as cash. If our church becomes known to the financial community as a group who collectively don't keep their financial promises, this reflects badly on the Lord we serve.

You know there are all sorts of needs around us both within and outside of the church. This year we are feeling the financial consequence of building these lovely surroundings. We have, through our budget, committed to give as much as we did last year plus 10%. If we don't all give 10% more, it's not going to happen. Yet by agreeing to the budget, we've collectively promised to do this.

That climate affects every ministry of the church. Women's Bible Study does not charge except for meals, and yet we have to pay children's workers in order to provide child care. That is why, twice each year, we take an offering to defray the costs. You have been wonderfully generous in these offerings, and between them and the budgeted amount the church gives to us, we can make it. But decent giving usually takes forward planning, and that is why I mention now that we will plan to take an end of the year Bible study offering in April. It's my hope that we can cover all of our costs in this way so that the church's monies can go to other areas.

After that sort of talk you might be thinking, "I'll never promise to give anything again! I'll just give when the Spirit moves me." But it's interesting how often the Spirit fails to actually move us to open our wallets – not because the Spirit is at fault, but because we are resistant. It's a whole lot easier if we use the method that Paul told the Corinthians: set a little aside each week and give it consistently.

But if we want to be serious, world changing givers, then we have to go to suggestion #2:

We can give

2. By disciplining our finances.

It's impossible to give more than spare change if we don't have disciplined finances. A beginning sort of benchmark for giving might be ten percent of your income. Now I didn't pick 10% because of the Jewish requirement for tithing. If that was something that we were held to I believe that Paul would have mentioned it specifically. On the contrary, he had to fight many battles with the "Judaizers" who wanted to hold Christians to Jewish law. Ten percent is a suggestion, not a legalistic requirement. But tithing, or giving a regular, designated portion of one's resources, IS a biblical practice. The amount you designate should come from the fact that you have already given yourself to God and therefore it's just a matter of recognizing his ownership over our possessions.

At the same time as you give some percentage, it is also wise to save at least ten percent of your income. A simple rule of thumb given in premarital counseling says: "Give ten percent, save ten percent, and live on the rest." That means that you have to design your outlay so that you are living on 80% or less of your income.

But think how freeing that is. No more huge debt weighing you down. The ability to react quickly to a need, whether that's an unexpected expense in your family or a critical call for help from the body of believers. By disciplining your finances, you have the true ability to share resources, simply because you're living within your means.

Lots of people have never had disciplined finances. So if you haven't, take advantage of the many books, services and people around you. There are individuals in this church who will, for free, confidentially sit down with you and help get you on sound financial footing. The church is offering a financial seminar in upcoming months – you can find out more information in RidgeLines. But basically it comes down to living on what you earn, and not taking on debt other than a mortgage. The reason that mortgage debt, within reason, makes sense is that in a typical economy a mortgage is a form of savings. You are purchasing a house which will likely appreciate. Ideally, a mortgage should be something you could sustain with just one salary in case one of you goes back to school, or wants to stay home with the children, and so on. See how disciplined finance gives you freedom of choice?

Finally, we learn how to give

3. By spiritual risk taking.

By this I mean that everyone at some time should take on a giving challenge that really, really stretches them – that becomes sacrificial. My husband John has related to the congregation how we sat down as a family at the beginning of the building program and agreed to give 90% of one year's income over three years. That meant that each year we needed to live on one third less than we had before in order to meet our commitment. That was the year before Nick went to college, so it was a pretty scary proposition. But he ended up with a full scholarship, and we were able to keep our promise by cutting other expenses. During most of our lives we have always given between ten and thirty percent of our income. An inheritance that we received was split 50-50 – half was spent, half was given. But there are others who are far more adept at the gift of giving who could tell you extraordinary stories of God's provision when they started giving sacrificially. It's amazing how it all works out. I can only say, always allow yourself to be stretched by your giving commitments. Then God will teach you how he provides all good things when we honor him first.

Last August John and I drove Emily off to her college in Pennsylvania and took two days for ourselves in the Laurel Highlands region. We had one exciting day white water rafting on the Youghiogheny River. Now the "Yough", as it's called, is divided into Upper, Middle and Lower stretches. And the Middle stretch is normally a placid, class II rapid – perfectly suitable for people who aren't very good swimmers and have never gone white water rafting. It's thought of as a family float ride – you don't have to have a guide in your raft. But as it happened, the day we rafted followed days of rain. So that easy Class II rapid had now become in stretches a Class IV rapid. Just so you know, there are only five classes! And they had cancelled a big annual whitewater event further down the river because it was just too dangerous with the high water.

So we got our five minutes of instruction, got into a rubber raft which was large enough for ten but held just the two of us, and started paddling. This picture is not us, but it is the Youghiogheny River. Just imagine that rubber boat, minus the beefy looking guy in the back who knows what he's doing...the guide. Our first job was to paddle completely across the river to the right in order to shoot the first rapid. Of course, we could hardly get anywhere and were soon rocketing down the river backwards. I have to say, that was one of the most adrenaline producing experiences I've ever had. I was scared out of my pants...literally, since the raft was being swamped with water. And one of the big sales points in the rafting literature is that these rafts are "self bailing". All that means is they give you a bucket, and if you could ever get a hand free to use it, you're supposed to bail out the gallons of water crashing into the middle of the raft.

But here's the thing...we had to work together. So he'd shout "paddle on the right" and I would furiously paddle and he'd shout, "No, the OTHER right!" and I'd try to correct it. There was no way either one of us incompetents could handle the raft alone. We had to work in tandem. Now John and I work very well together as a team, but it is by DIVISION of labor, not pooling of labor. We each have our tasks. But in the raft, we both had the same task, and we had to do it in synchronization or we were going to die...or so I thought. In retrospect, this was probably about as dangerous as the log ride at Disneyland, but at the time, it seemed pretty perilous.

Well of course we made it! And it was great fun. But we had to pull together.

Giving is a bit like that. Within a family you have to pull together on the finances, or giving is never going to happen without conflict. Similarly, in the family of Christ we must pull together on the giving. This is not the responsibility of one or two people. This is not the responsibility of the wealthy. It is OUR shared responsibility, to give OUR shared resources, with an open heart.

Questions for Shared Resources: How to Give With an Open Heart

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of when you hear the term “sacrificial giving”? Give an example of what might be sacrificial giving in our culture. Has there ever been a time when you felt called to some unusual degree of commitment for giving?
2. Paul says in 2 Cor. 8:21: “For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.” Why would it make any difference whether or not Paul did what was right in the eyes of men as long as he was doing what was right in the eyes of God? Is there a difference between the way men and God view things?
3. The Corinthians were told to give so that there would be equality. Is that sort of equality achievable in a church today? Why or why not?

Intensive Study Questions

Memory verse: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” (2nd Cor. 8:9)

1. Why does Paul praise the Macedonian churches in this passage? What had the Corinthian churches done so far for the other churches in need? What attitude of heart must serve as the basis for true giving? [hint: there’s a good reason given in chapter 8]
2. Paul gives the Corinthians several compelling reasons to give. Name at least three of them. Now define “sacrificial giving” for a person in our culture. Have you ever been called to this type of a gift?
3. Why do you think Paul makes such a big deal about the character of the people mentioned in 2 Cor. 8:16-24? What is Paul asking the Corinthians to do with these people?
4. Look at 2 Cor. 9:6. Does this verse mean that we will receive material benefit if we give? Why or why not? What other advice about giving does Jesus give? Does what he says confirm what Paul says here, or differ? Why should we continue to give even if we consider ourselves poor?
5. Is it fair that we should give from our wages or savings, to those who have not worked as hard? Find two verses that speak to our attitudes and actions towards the poor. Does the Bible distinguish between the “deserving” poor (i.e., those who have been born into poverty and cannot escape it) and the “less deserving poor” (those who have made choices which have made them poor)?
6. Christ laid aside his riches and became poor for us. What has that selfless action achieved for us? Name three gifts or benefits that we have because of Christ’s willingness to lay down his life for us. Now think of how those gifts or benefits have affected your own life. What is different for you because of what Christ did in laying down his life?