



## **Preparing for Faith Promise**

Before presenting the Faith Promise offering to the congregation, it is important to understand that the concept is built on sound biblical principles.

As a team, it is good to study the first lesson together. There are several lessons here that can be made available to your small groups, missional communities, and Sunday school classes.



## **Faith Promise Lesson #1**

### **2 Corinthians 8 and 9**

There are three great truths about God:

1. God loves the world.
2. God has unlimited resources to reach the world.
3. God channels these resources through His own people.

One of the ways God channels His resources is the Faith Promise offering, which is new terminology to describe the way churches in the New Testament gave to help people in distant places. According to 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Faith Promise had several characteristics:

- It was an offering over and above local church support.
- Rather than being a cash offering, it was a faith offering, promising in faith to contribute a certain amount over a one-year period.
- It was given in faith. The reward in ability to give during the year was seen as being directly proportional to the commitment made in faith. In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul illustrated this by a farmer who reaped what he sowed in faith, believing that the sun and rain God provided would prosper the amount of seed he had sown.

God honors the Faith Promise of a Christian by making His grace abound (2 Corinthians 9:8) and enabling financial involvement in local and global missions. This grace generally comes in one of three ways:

- The grace of new opportunity: Sometimes God gives special grace through new opportunities such as overtime work, “moonlighting,” or increased business profits. Often God will allow a sensitive Christian with a burden for the world to work creatively and diligently in order to provide additional revenue for global missions.
- The grace of discipline: God often gives His people the special grace of discipline. This involves a change of lifestyle. Everyone operates on this principle when they deny themselves certain things in order to spend their money on things they consider more important.
- The grace of the unusual: Sometimes God supplies His grace in unusual ways. In response to prayer, God still does the spectacular and unexpected.

Have you ever made a Faith Promise offering? Should you?

Did you know that the first offering recorded in the New Testament given by a church for a people in another area was such an offering? It all started when a man named Agabus came as a guest speaker to the church at Antioch. This was during the time when Barnabas and Paul were part of the pastoral staff of that responsive church. Agabus predicted that a famine would come, and it would affect primarily the people in Judea. The Christians of Antioch took this prophecy very seriously. They trusted God to provide them the additional funds needed to give to those who would be impacted by the famine situation in Judea. When they raised an amount that matched their goal, they sent it to Judea via Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 11:27-30)



Paul mentioned this special offering when he wrote to the Galatian churches. He reported that the church leaders in Jerusalem had requested that he and his Gentile converts “should continue to remember the poor,” and that this was in fact “the very thing I was eager to do.” (Galatians 2:10)

Now you know the rest of the story! Paul took the model of that first Faith Promise offering, expanded and developed it, and encouraged all the churches he established to participate in it. They pooled their offerings to meet the needs of people outside of their local church communities. Churches in Galatia, Corinth, Macedonia, Rome, and all over the Roman Empire participated in this type of offering, which was over and above the tithes people gave for their local work. (2 Corinthians 8 and 9 form the largest portion of Scripture where this offering is detailed.)

In response to faith, God’s grace provided the following results:

- Needs were met.
- God was glorified.
- Faith was strengthened.
- All gave thanks to God.

This type of offering is now being dynamically used for addressing a more critical famine, a hunger for the gospel.

A Faith Promise offering is simply faith in God to provide an amount of money followed by a promise to donate it. Paul called this the “grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:7). Grace is always a provision of something we don’t have. A Faith Promise offering is a commitment to give what we trust God to provide.

The church at Antioch took seriously the responsibility to meet these needs: (Acts 11:29, 30)

- Each believer participated. (vs. 29)
- Each personally decided they would do this. (vs. 29)
- They followed through and did it. (vs. 30)

When people take seriously the needs of the world and ask, “How can I help?” great things happen. A Faith Promise offering meets needs outside one’s local church.

- It is not giving out of what we have, but rather giving by faith.
- In response to faith, God’s grace will provide the amount.

The end result of our Faith Promise offering is that the gospel is communicated, people respond to Jesus, and God is glorified!

Should you make a Faith Promise offering? Of course! Why? Because God will be pleased. How much should you give? That’s between you and God!

**THE REST OF THE STORY IS DETERMINED BY YOUR ANSWERS!**



## **Faith Promise Lesson #2**

### **2 Corinthians 8 and 9**

#### The grace of Faith Promise giving

When writing in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 about the Faith Promise offering, Paul commands us to “excel in this grace of giving” (8:7). What is this “grace of giving”?

It is an offering supplied by God’s grace (8:1-7). “And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches... They gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability... See that you also excel in the grace of giving.” Grace is favor and sufficiency that God gives to help us in our needs and insufficiencies. Here, grace is connected to giving a special offering.

What do you do when you want to give and do not have the personal resources to do so? Paul would say that you should view it as an opportunity for God’s grace to intervene and to supply your need, “even beyond your ability.”

An offering to be completed within a year (8:8-15). “Last year you were the first not only to give, but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by our completion of it.”

Knowing that God had provided the resources throughout the year, Paul reminds them that they had promised to give what God had provided. Having a goal of completing the offering within one year would help them match the good intentions of their faith.

An offering to be carefully administered (8:16-21). “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.” Paul knew that the total offering would be large. He took care to have it properly administered. He understood the need for financial accountability.

An offering that moves other churches to action (8:22-9:5). “Show these men the proof of your love...your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.” Paul knew that a large offering from the Corinthian church would enlarge the vision of other churches (8:24). It would motivate others to stretch their faith as well.

An offering according to faith (9:6-15). “Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” Faith Promise is the term we apply to the kind of offering Paul is describing. In terms of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, we could say that 8:10-11 and 9:2-5 refer to the “commitment” of the contributor, and the remaining portions of these two chapters deal with the “faith” aspect.

Paul’s description of faith comes from the world of agriculture. Farmer and city dweller alike know that when a farmer sows seed, he is exercising faith that the sun will shine, the rain will come, and the nutrients in the soil will operate to bring about a harvest. Without faith there can be no harvest, nor any completion of the offering. Small faith, sowing few seeds, will bring about



a larger harvest. This is Paul's illustration to encourage the Corinthians to be generous. Paul wants their faith to be large. In response, God's grace will provide plenty so that their intent can be fully realized.

### The explanation, clarification, and instruction of Faith Promise giving

Faith Promise giving is:

- giving the Lord an opportunity to work in our lives.
- saying, "In dependence on God I will endeavor to give \$\_\_\_\_\_."
- scriptural in focus. Its target is the church's God-given task to make disciples of all nations.
- an extra gift that you might not be able to give apart from trusting God to provide it.

According to what Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, a Faith Promise is an amount:

- more than one can afford. (8:2-4)
- that follows personal commitment. (8:5)
- that is optional, but is a test of love. (8:8)
- promised in advance of the giving. (9:5)
- personally purposed. (9:7)
- that you can give cheerfully. (9:7)
- provided by God. (9:8)

How do I excel in this kind of giving?

Answer: Look at your present giving and ask, "For how much more can I trust God?"

- Examine present spending habits. Are there areas in which you could be more disciplined so that more can be given to the Lord to reach the world for Him?
- Seek a means of earning extra money.
- Expect God to provide a specific amount in His own way.

How do I participate in the Faith Promise offering of our church?

We will be gathering the Faith Promise offering on the closing Sunday of our Global Impact Celebration. After prayer and consideration as an individual or couple, mark your commitment card with the amount you will endeavor to give to global missions. The total of these commitments will go completely to the missions ministry of our church.

Remember: Faith Promise is a special offering which you will trust God to provide out of His grace. In anticipation of His provision, you commit to give it.