

they weigh on us; they take our energy; they hold us back from moving forward in life. ... That's what Paul is telling the Corinthian Christians. You started, but you haven't yet finished. ... Write down one unfinished project that you can begin this week to bring to completion.

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*My Faith Journal, May 3, 2009*  
**Fanning the Flame ...**  
**... of Gratitude**

**What do I hear God saying to me today?**  
2 Corinthians 8:1-15

**Saturday, 5/9/09 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:12**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_

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A Question to Answer: Paul's advice is very sensible. We can only be stewards of what we have. We cannot be stewards of what we don't have. Sometimes we think that we're expected to contribute some arbitrary amount. But Paul is very clear: our gift is to be given "according to what one has." ... Would Paul's suggestion here help you to think about your offering? Would it help simply to focus on what you do have? What difference does this make for you?

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**What action do I intend to take this week?**

**Sunday, 5/10/09 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:13-14**  
**and 1 Corinthians 12:26-27**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_

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A Question to Answer: Paul thinks of our relationships with one another in the Christian community in a particular way: "If one member suffers, all suffer together." How have you experienced this? When has the suffering of others touched you so deeply that you were suffering with them? ... Paul understands giving money in this sense -- that we are deeply interrelated with one another. (Remember that Paul is raising money to alleviate the poverty of the Christians in Jerusalem.) ... What difference might it make in your giving if you understood the Christian community in this deep and interrelated way?

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*Each day this week, take a few minutes. Begin with PRAYER. Then READ through the Bible passage indicated on the inside of this guide. WRITE down your own thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.*

**Fanning the Flame**

**Monday, 5/4/09 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15**

My Observations \_\_\_\_\_  
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A Question to Answer: This week we are working through one of the apostle Paul's most important statements about generosity and giving money. Paul had agreed to raise money from the Gentile churches for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul is encouraging the Corinthian Christians to complete the offering they had pledged to make to alleviate the poverty of their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. ... Today we read the whole passage. Read through it quickly. Read it through a couple times. What jumps out at you? What catches your attention? What questions occur to you as you read Paul's thoughts? ... Jot down some of your observations and questions.

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**Tuesday, 5/5/09 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-2**

My Observations \_\_\_\_\_  
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A Question to Answer: Paul uses the Christians in Macedonia (a region north and east of Greece) as an example. He mentions "affliction" and "poverty"; and yet these Macedonians found "abundant joy" and "generosity." What do you think of that? ... Sometimes we get caught thinking that we'll be joyful just as soon as the ordeal is over; we'll be generous just as soon as we get beyond this current economic downturn. ... What do you think of these people Paul mentions? ... Could that really happen? Do you think it might happen for you?

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**Wednesday, 5/6/09 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:3-5**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_  
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A Question to Answer: Look at what Paul says next: "they gave themselves first to the Lord." Our view of our lives -- our view of everything -- changes when we discover that we are not defined by our circumstances. "They gave themselves to the Lord," and in that commitment, in that relationship, they discovered a source of joy and generosity. ... What do you think? Does it seem sometimes that your life is defined by your circumstances? Are there moments when you discover a joy and a generosity deeper than circumstances? Describe what those moments are like for you.

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**Thursday, 5/7/09 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:7-9**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_  
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A Question to Answer: Extravagant generosity is the nature of God. That's what God does -- always. God gives -- generously. The stars and galaxies are the result of God splattering divine generosity into empty darkness. You are alive because God generously gave you life. God's generous love for you is so deep and so intense that in Jesus God embraces all the afflictions of our human lives. ... Does God's generosity call forth any response in you? Gratitude? Generosity? How do you respond to God's extravagant generosity?

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**Friday, 5/8/09 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:10-11**

My Observations: \_\_\_\_\_  
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A Question to Answer: Do you have trouble finishing projects? Do you find it easier to start something than to finish it? How many unfinished projects are there around your house right now? ... It's a spiritual problem. When we don't finish things,