

Leverage Your Life

Stick Together

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

We are in a series about leveraging our lives for the mission of God where we live, work, and play. It is a call to commit together to engage with our communities so that they can hear about and respond to the love of Jesus. We are God's Plan A to reach out to friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we need each other to pull it off!

The Christian life was never meant to be lived all alone, but together in community with other followers of Jesus. Consider that most of the New Testament was written to groups of people, rather than one person. In fact, we believe that Paul wrote 13 letters recorded in the scripture and all but three of them were addressed to groups of people. Also, all five great commission passages are written in the plural form, indicating that we are a FAMILY ON MISSION!!!

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (y'all), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you (yuze guys) always, to the end of the age." **Matthew 28:19-20 – Family on Mission**

We like our freedom, we never want to be dependent on anyone, and we love having our options open. But...

Main Idea: Leveraging our Lives for the Mission of God where we Live, Work, and Play is done in Community alongside Other Believers and Churches

"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 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. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints - and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Three Reasons to Stick Together in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

- I. **Examples to Inspire** *"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 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. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord."* **2 Corinthians 8:1-3**

Paul saw first-hand the incredible faith of the churches and believers in Macedonia (Philippi, Berea, & Thessalonica). It moved him deeply. He shared the impact they had made on him with the church in Corinth (recipient) to encourage them. Those Macedonian believers were an inspiration, to what?

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 6:19-21 – They were living the words of Jesus!

Whatever Biblical principle you're struggling with (faith, prayer, stewardship, marriage, parenting, patience, etc.) I can promise you that there is another follower of Jesus who has wrestled with this and can help! As a church, we have learned so much from other churches on so many topics. Usually, when we face an issue, we pray and start reaching out to other pastors/churches for guidance on how they handled it! Examples!!!

II. Efforts to Join *"Begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints."* **2 Corinthians 8:4**

The context of this passage is that the "Mother Church" back in Judea was suffering with extreme poverty. When people trusted Jesus, they were put out of the synagogue which meant more than just having to find someplace else to go to church...it wrecked their entire lives (family, friends, job, etc.). So, because Paul believed that the gentile believers were indebted to them, he was taking up a collection of resources to support them in their distress.

"For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings." **Romans 15:26-27 – Double Benefit for Jews and Gentiles!**

I love how Paul notes that they were *begging us earnestly for the favor of giving*. These impoverished people needed a favor, the chance to be generous. (In nearly 17 years of pastoral ministry, I have had people beg for a lot of things but I have never had anyone beg me to give them the opportunity to give generously! When we stick together, we have opportunities to embrace efforts together!

III. Family to Embrace *"But they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."* **2 Corinthians 8:5**

Paul notes that the faith of the Macedonians was not just a personal matter. As they surrendered to the Lord, they also embraced the community. This is everywhere in the New Testament. You are hard-pressed to find someone who is truly saved who did not dive head-first into a fellowship of faith. And, you have a hard time finding a new church that was planted all by itself, rather it was usually planted as a ministry of a sending church.

One of the churches in Macedonia practiced this principle (giving themselves to God and others) in a very practical way later. Paul was imprisoned in Rome, and the church at Philippi wanted to bless him so they sent Epaphroditus with money to support him. On the journey or while visiting Paul, he became very ill, and Paul noted that he nearly died (Phil 2).

“So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.” 1 Thessalonians 2:8 – We’re a family!

No church is perfect, we all make mistakes, misunderstand, and must work to maintain the unity of the Spirit. But, it is worth it to STICK TOGETHER because our God is good, the task is great, and this is what Jesus has called us to do.

Main Idea: Leveraging our Lives for the Mission of God where we Live, Work, and Play is done in Community alongside Other Believers and Churches

Sticking together is more than just a cool phrase that describes an essential element of our church and the kingdom of God. It’s Jesus! Jesus surrendered himself first to God (not my will, but yours be done) and then gave himself for us (Father forgive them for they know not what they do).

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Ephesians 5:1-2

Jesus desires to stick together with you, and help you stick together with us, and help us stick together with other churches to leverage our lives for his mission where we live, work and play! But, it starts with surrender to him!

Sources and Further Reading Opportunities:

- *CSB Study Bible* – Trevin Wax, General Editor (2021)
- *New Bible Commentary* – Carson, France, Motyer, & Wenham (1994)
- *New American Commentary: 2 Corinthians* – Daniel Garland (1999)
- *Bible Exposition Commentary* – Warren Wiersbe (1996)
- *The Letters to the Corinthians* – William Barclay (1976)
- *Tony Evans Study Bible* – Tony Evans (2019)
- *The Spurgeon Study Bible* – Charles Haddon Spurgeon (2017)
- *Word Pictures in the New Testament* – A.T. Robertson (1933)