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Message Outline

Engage (Part 2) 2 Corinthians 8:1-11

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We give...

to join God's work.

enthusiastically.

because we are receivers.

Looking Back

Engage (Part 2) 2 Corinthians 8:1-11

Because other people engaged in generosity, you and I had the opportunity to hear and respond in faith to the good news about Jesus. God chooses to work through our generosity to continue his work in our world today. By examining the apostle Paul's encouragement and instructions to an early Christians at Corinth we can each find our next step of growth in generosity...

I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare...If our charities [our giving] do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. ~ C.S. Lewis

There are three conversions necessary to every man: the head, the heart, and the purse. ~ Martin Luther

The basic question is not how much of our money we should give to God, but how much of God's money we should keep for ourselves. ~ J. Oswald Sanders

Working It Out

1. Read through the expanded passage of 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. If alone, read through at least three times. If in a group, split this into paragraphs for different voices to read aloud (v. 1-2, 3-5, 6-7, 8, 9, 10-12a, 12b-15).
2. How do you feel when the subject of generosity or financial management rises at church or within your group? Why do you think you feel that way?
3. What action or behavior is Paul encouraging the Corinthian church to complete?
 - a. What are some of the results of this action?
 - b. How does our generosity reveal the position or state of our heart?
4. How does Paul want the Corinthian church to engage in generosity?
 - a. How does the Macedonian example inform the way the Corinthians as well as you and I are encouraged to give?
 - b. What principles inform the way we give from this passage?
5. From this passage, what are some reasons for God's people to be generous? Why should we engage in generosity?
6. How might God be leading you to grow in generosity? What is your next step in becoming a more generous person to "excel in this gracious act of giving?"

Leader's Guide

Getting started

Use question #2 from Looking Back as your icebreaker. Be prepared for a range of responses and possibly strong emotional responses. This can be important to a fruitful discussion. Some people welcome these conversations, others are uncomfortable, and some might respond with hostility. Being honest about how we approach conversations around money and generosity is a necessary first step toward movement and growth. Some people have been bruised by abusive practices from manipulative spiritual leaders, some have struggled with financial decisions and mistakes, and others wholeheartedly embrace generosity as part of spiritual growth. Knowing where we're coming from helps us take steps to a different destination. Be gracious to help people move toward growth.

Going Deeper

If you use the second question as your icebreaker, this will move you straight into the discussion time. Following through with questions 1 then 3-5 should guide you to unearth the truth of this passage for understanding and application. These questions simply use a What, How, why progression to understand and apply the truth of the text. Use the quotations how you see fit. Here's an extra thought you may want to work in. John Wesley, one of the most powerful positive influences from the 18th century and founder of Methodism, is famous for saying: "Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can." Something about that statement is appealing and also disturbing. How can (or has) that notion played out in life (your life, mine, our shared experience, culture and history) in both positive and negative ways? Is this advice: biblical, nearly biblical, or antagonistic to biblical truth?

Wrapping Up

Use the final question from Looking Back to encourage your group to complete a homework assignment: Review what God has given you and ask him what he wants to do with it. You might walk around and through your home cataloguing or noticing your possessions, take stock of your income or sources of revenue, jot down details about your opportunities for influence through relationships or positions you hold, or review your investments or real estate. Put these things, whether material or immaterial, before the Lord. Invite him into your decision-making process. What could he accomplish through all that he has graciously given you?

Here's a prayer prompt to help you guide your prayer time: Gracious Father, you are the first and greatest Giver. From your original gift, all life sprang into being. You carefully planned how to give us eternal and spiritual life through giving your Son for us. Give us wisdom to care for the resources entrusted to us and grant us abundant joy as we join your work in our world through generosity.

Titus