

The Macedonian Example

READ through the Bible passage. WRITE your thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life experience. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.

Monday, 4/14/08 – Read Romans 15:22-33

My Observations _____

A Question to Answer: A major controversy developed very early among the followers of Jesus -- within the first couple decades. The question was simple: would those Gentiles (non-Jews) who were coming to faith in Jesus have to become Jews before they could become Christians? The question was finally resolved at a meeting in Jerusalem of all the apostles and leaders of the church. (See Acts 15 for an account of that meeting.) The agreement was that the Gentile Christians would not have to follow Jewish law and practice. It was also agreed that Paul would raise money among the Gentile Churches to alleviate the poverty of the Christians in Jerusalem. ... In today's reading Paul refers to his plans to go to Jerusalem to deliver the money that has been raised among the Gentile churches. ... Raising money to alleviate people's poverty goes all the way back to the church's earliest days. ... How do you feel about raising money in the church? The apostles themselves were involved in fundraising -- does this affect your attitude?

Tuesday, 4/15/08 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: In today's reading, Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, and he's referring to the church in Macedonia. And he's talking about the money he's raising for alleviation of the poverty of the Christians in Jerusalem. As you read through this passage, what are your impressions and reactions? As you jot them down, be aware of your attitudes and feelings about fundraising in the church.

Wednesday, 4/16/08 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-2

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Read these two verses closely. Of the Macedonian Christians Paul says: "during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity." ... Sometimes we think that we don't have enough to be generous. Maybe we think, "If I had a lot -- or if I had more -- I would be generous." Have you ever thought that? Do you think that prosperity and generosity are related? ... At least in case of the Macedonian Christians, they were generous despite their poverty. What do you think of that?

Thursday, 4/17/08 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:5

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Paul McReynolds has introduced to us the phrase "Reach Up, Reach In, Reach Out." The Macedonian Christians clearly followed that order. Paul says that "they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us" (Reach UP, Reach IN). ... Does our giving (and how we feel about it) change when we first reach UP to God, when we first give ourselves to the Lord? ... Does our giving change when we also reach IN, when we live in open community with one another?

Friday, 4/18/08 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:5-7

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Paul urges the Corinthian Christians to excel in generosity. He notes that they excel in everything --

speech, faith, knowledge, eagerness (enthusiasm), and love. Now he urges them also to excel in generosity. ... What do you excel in? What are you really good at? -- Come on, be specific. Make a list. ... Is generosity also something God wants you to excel in?

Saturday, 4/19/08 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:8-9

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Perhaps the core of Paul's argument is the example of Christ: he became poor so that we might become rich. How does that strike you? What do you think of it? Is that a helpful analogy? ... How do you feel when you think of what Christ has done for you? ... In your prayer today, talk with Christ about what he has done for you. Tell him how you feel about that.

Sunday, 4/20/08 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:10-12

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Sometimes when we talk about money in the church, it's easy to get the impression that we're supposed to give what we don't have. Paul is very clear: "the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have." We are asked only to be responsible for and generous with what we have -- not with what we don't have. The test is "eagerness" -- a willing and happy participation in the work that God is doing. ... Do you find that eagerness in your heart? Include that in your prayer today; talk with God about how you feel about participating in the work that God is doing in the church and in the world.

My Faith Journal, April 13, 2008

Reach UP, Reach IN, Reach OUT

The Macedonian Example

Main Points of Today's Message

Gave themselves first to the Lord.

2 Corinthians 8:5

Poverty and Generosity

2 Corinthians 8:1-2

Only what you have.

2 Corinthians 8:10-12