

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM
WEEK THREE: GIFTS
A MORE EXCELLENT WAY



A More Excellent Way: Gifts

OPENING PRAYER:

Good and Generous God, we give you thanks for all your many blessings. Please stir our hearts so that we may give generously to you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

How have you seen God at work this week?

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WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

Read Exodus 35:20-22

“Then all the congregation of the Israelites withdrew from the presence of Moses. And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the Lord’s offering to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the sacred vestments. So they came, both men and women; all who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and pendants, all sorts of gold objects, everyone bringing an offering of gold to the Lord.”

Read Exodus 36:4-7

“... so that all the artisans who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task being performed, and said to Moses, ‘The people are bringing much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.’ So, Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp: ‘No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.’ So, the people were restrained from bringing; for what they had already brought was more than enough to do all the work.”

REFLECTION:

Our God is good and generous. God is the giver of life. God’s original intention for humanity was to be a steward over the world that He had made. God generously gave dominion to humanity. However, the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden created a gulf between humanity and divinity, which lead to spiritual captivity. Ever since then, we have struggled against temptation to give ourselves to created things rather than give ourselves to our Creator.

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REFLECTION

Many years later, people of Israel find themselves in physical captivity in the land of Egypt. God sends Moses to deliver them. God gives them freedom. They leave with the spoils of Egypt, the gold, silver, and gems. God gives them protection by sending an angel and a pillar of cloud and fire. God splits the red sea. God gives them water to drink, rains bread from heaven, and gives them quail to eat. God gave them victory of their enemies. God gave generously to a people who in previous chapters of Exodus are called a stiff-necked people.

However, these stiff-necked people experienced a change of heart. The scripture tells us that the people's hearts were stirred. My friends, generosity flows from the heart. Heart stirring happens when we take time to consider what God has done for us. That's why hymns and songs of praise are so powerful. The songs of praise remind us that God is good, and we are loved! How has he shown his love? If you just look back over the story of your life you will see God's fingerprints all over it. God is there in times of good and bad. When I think about my God and all that he has done for me, I can't help but feel the Spirit stirring in my heart. What has God done for you? Has God been a provider? A way maker, a miracle worker, a promise keeper, a light in the darkness?

Hearts are stirred when our faith takes us to a place that our eyes cannot see but will be made manifest in God's preferred future. We cannot see it now but trust the vision that God has given leadership. Moses told them they needed to raise an offering to build the Tent of Meeting, a place where the Presence of God would dwell among his people. By faith they gave. Their hearts stirred because they believed they would meet God- Encounter the Presence of the living God in that sacred place. If you believe God is here moving our midst. God is here working in this place, God is here, turning lives around, mending every heart, then the proper response is generosity. From a restored heart and spirit will come an acceptable sacrifice and offering for rebuilding. The scripture says that they gave so much until builders had to ask the people to stop. It was a free will offering, meaning that it was not a tithe. The people were not focused on the bare minimum that they could give. They gave cheerfully and sacrificially.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Encounter The Head:

Why has God given us what God already has?

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What is a tithe? (mentioned in sermon) What is the difference between the tithe and the type of offering collected in this scripture passage?

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What was the most impactful thing that you learned from the podcast, sermon, sermon discussion guide, or from the scripture?

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Encounter The Heart:

Share a time when you gave sacrificially to cause, to help a friend or loved one, or to the church? What did you learn about God, yourself, and the recipient?

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Share a time when you were excited to give. Why might some view giving as a burden rather than a joy and an opportunity?

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GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Encounter The Hands:

Take five minutes to write down ways that you would like to make a major impact for the kingdom of God. Now consider how you might support the ministries of the church to make that happen.

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Share and discuss ways that you can remove some of those barriers as a group.

Encounter The Home:

Look at your budget. Calculate the percentage of your income that goes to support the vision and mission of the church. If you fall below 10 percent, we encourage you to work towards that goal. If we aren't at 10 percent, can we start at 5 percent, if not 5 percent then 2.5 percent- work your way to the tithe. Please review the following scriptures: Genesis 14:29, Deuteronomy 14:22-29, Numbers 18: 21-24.



PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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