

MAIN POINT

When we make room for more OF God, we are filled with more FROM God.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the best experience you have had being a part of a team? What made that experience so memorable?

On the other hand, does anyone have a story of a comically bad team experience? What went wrong?

God has created His people with community in mind. The church is comprised of people who join together with a common bond—love for and commitment to Christ—and a common mission—taking the gospel to the world. As part of the church, you have been given gifts and skills that God wants you to joyfully and generously put to use to help accomplish that mission. When Christians combine their gifts for God’s purposes, powerful things happen.

UNDERSTANDING

READ [EXODUS 36:1-2](#).

[Exodus 36:2-7](#) is part of a larger portion of the Book of Exodus that describes the building of the Tabernacle. Moses assembled all the Israelites and reminded them not to work on the Sabbath. He then called on them to bring offerings to be used in the construction of the tabernacle. Moses asked skilled craftsmen to provide their services. The wide range of materials and skills needed allowed everyone to provide something for God’s work. The people brought materials, and the skilled workers came to assist under the direction of Bezalel and Oholiab.

Read [Exodus 35:30-35](#). What skills did Bezalel and Oholiab possess?

Why might God have equipped them with those varied skills?

God gifted Bezalel, Oholiab, and other Israelites with the skills needed to construct the tabernacle. He also gave them specific directions for constructing the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the priestly garments. They were not to deviate from God’s instructions. Their obedience to God and use of their skills in His service would bless them and the Israelites of their generation as well as generations to come.

As members of the body of Christ, we have the responsibility to put our gifts to use for God and to do so with a generous spirit. Paul used the church in Macedonia as an example of the power our combined gifts can have when we use them to fulfill God’s purposes.

READ [2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15](#).

What do you learn about the Macedonians from their giving?

What four principles about giving do you observe in this passage? (Giving out of devotion to Jesus, love for fellow believers, the joy of helping those in need, the good and right thing to do)

Read [2 Corinthians 8:9](#) again. This verse reveals what should motivate all believers to willingly sacrifice of themselves for the sake of others in the community—Jesus’ sacrifice for us. Jesus practiced and taught sacrificial giving. Gratitude for what Jesus has done for us motivates us to demonstrate responsible stewardship of our lives and our possessions.

READ [EXODUS 36:3-7](#).

What is your main takeaway from the example of the Israelites in this text?

What does this level of generosity communicate to God?

The Bible is full of metaphors that help us understand the nature of the church. In [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#), Paul calls the church the body of Christ. Just as every part of our own bodies is essential, so every part of His body is essential. When each part of the church body puts its God-given gifts and skills to work, we see the church being built up and functioning rightly. But when even the smallest part ceases to function as it should, it causes a ripple effect throughout the rest of the body. We must see that every believer is a unique and essential member of the body of Christ.

Why do you think Paul chose the image of the body to describe the church?

How does this metaphor help us understand and value everyone in the church?

Why is it important that different believers with different gifts and skills come together in unity? What happens if they do not?

Though every part of the human body is unique, every part is essential for the body to do what it was designed to do. In the body of Christ, all of the individual gifts in the lives of believers come together for the church to be built up. If we can’t come together, embracing each other in unity in the church, then what reason will the rest of the world have to believe the message we tell them?

Why do you think some of us might struggle with fulfilling our role in the body of Christ?

For the church to function rightly, every believer must know and embrace whom God has made him or her to be in Christ. To do that, we must recognize that we are intentionally and individually made and gifted by God. Regardless of how we see ourselves, God has carefully created us to serve as an essential part in the body of Christ.

If you read on in Exodus, you read that using the donated materials, the skilled craftsmen fashioned everything for the tabernacle precisely as God had instructed. An inventory of skilled craftsmen and materials indicated the generous spirit of the people (36:8–38:31). God commanded the people to set up the tabernacle, and they did so under Moses’ supervision. After it had been set up, Moses offered incense and animal sacrifices, consecrating Aaron and his sons as priests. A cloud descended on the tabernacle, and God’s glory filled the structure

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Based on what we've read, why is it important for you, as an individual Christian, to be generous? Why is it important for the church, as a collective body, to be generous?

How can you remind someone close to you this week that they are unique and special in the body of Christ?

How can you take the next step in using your abilities for the good of the whole church?

PRAYER

Pray that God would continually remind your group that giving should be done cheerfully, not reluctantly. Also pray that our stewardship of our skills and gifts would ultimately glorify God and bring others into His kingdom.

COMMENTARY

EXODUS 36:2-7

With this passage, Moses augmented the command-fulfillment pattern with a heartwarming story about how enthusiastically the people responded to the call for donations of materials needed for the tabernacle. This is just the sort of account that takes away much of the tedium of reading the fulfillment chapters. The fulfillment takes on special meaning when it is understood that it happened in abundance, from willing hearts gladly giving, and that nothing needed for the tabernacle construction was ever lacking. When a community is asked to back something as major as the tabernacle project was, and does so fully and rapidly, it speaks volumes about that community's unity of purpose—its solidarity in responding to the divine call. The people who, some weeks earlier, had been defiant and degenerate in their faith ([chap. 32](#)) now joined together to make sure that what God had asked them to do would not fail to happen. This constitutes further evidence of their repentance for their earlier involvement in the golden young bull idolatry and their present confidence in Moses and his mediation of God's instructions for covenantally faithful worship.

36:2-3. The holy project swung rapidly into motion. "Bezalel and Oholiab" (see [31:2](#)) and "every skilled person" (see [26:1](#)) went to work, under a process that saw Moses receiving the people's offerings and immediately passing them on to the builders. (This ensured that Moses could inspect everything donated, for appropriateness and quality, before it went to any of the constructors.) The fact that the people "continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning" demonstrates that they were not perfunctorily fulfilling the call for offerings, but were eagerly and cheerfully doing whatever they could to be sure that enough supplies for the work would be in the hands of the craftsmen. It would not be going too far to suggest that the people were here described as highly enthusiastic about the project, recognizing in it the opportunity to begin keeping the covenant correctly as opposed to their prior gross disobedience ([chap. 32](#)).

36:4-7. Moses was eventually required to insist rather forcefully to all the people ("throughout the camp") that no more material could be donated, since all required supplies had reached full levels. Some men and women gathered or spun or wove or dyed or otherwise prepared tabernacle contributions that never were used for the tabernacle. Such overages probably were put to some other use by families and clans, but they were not used at the tabernacle.