

Bible Talk: “Gimme More!”

Biblical Text and Big Idea: Acts 20:32-35. Giving Beats Getting

1. **Ice Breaker:** Distribute two different vouchers (you'll need to prepare these ahead of time: print out or write out on a piece of paper each voucher – and place it into an envelope) to each member of the discussion group. The first voucher is redeemable for \$350. Ask each person what was **the very first thing** that they considered purchasing with an extra \$350. Don't comment on their responses... just ask each person to quickly state their purchase as you move briskly around the circle of participants. Do the same thing with the second voucher. This voucher states that the person has been given a day off from school/work/homemaking/etc... tomorrow. Ask each person what was **the very first thing** they considered doing with the extra time made available to them. It's best that you, as moderator, set the pace by first sharing what you would do in each scenario - be candid rather than religious as you set the pace for other responses. After you've surveyed all the purchases and activities, open a discussion about a mindset of consuming rather than contributing.
2. **Read the Passage (Acts 20:32-35)**
3. **Textual Questions:**
 - a. (v. 32-33) What does *covet* mean? Why would Paul mention silver, gold, and clothing as objects that are likely to be coveted? What have you coveted this week? What are you most likely to covet?
 - b. How does coveting start? How does it grow?
 - c. What's an item that you've recently purchased that was not a "life or death" necessity? How did you come to desire that item? How did you move from being curious to becoming a consumer?
 - d. (v. 34) While in Ephesus, what did Paul do besides preach the gospel? How did his hands "supply my own needs and the needs of my companions"?
 - e. What did Paul do with the extra money he made?
 - f. When Paul's companions in turn supplied his needs (see Acts 18:3-5 where Paul takes a break from tentmaking), what did Paul do with his extra time? (Answer: "Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching")
 - g. How does Paul's use of extra time and money differ from your use? (Paul used it to contribute while we used it to consume!) Why does Paul's use of extra time and money differ from your use?
 - h. (v. 35) Who are the "weak" in this passage? How do you think Paul and his companions helped them?
 - i. Jesus says that it's more blessed to contribute rather than to consume... how often do you hear the opposite throughout the day? Do you really believe that it's more blessed to give than to receive? How is it better for you to give than to receive? How will your "free" day activities change if you really live out what you say you believe about giving and receiving? How will your \$350 shopping spree change if you live out what you believe?
 - j. If you live out Jesus' teaching, how do think that you will be blessed here on earth? How will you be blessed in heaven?
4. **Concluding Questions**
 - Do you want to be known for what you consumed or for what you contributed?
 - What are you now known for consuming (with your time and money)? What are you now known for contributing (with your time and money)?
 - How will that practically change beginning later today? How will that be a blessing to you and to others?
5. **Final Charge:** We live in a culture that "preaches" consumerism on all channels. Show the world that someone will actually place real faith in Jesus' words that "it's more blessed to give than to receive." Perhaps you will spark a cultural revolution that revives your faith, your family, and your friends.

Bible Talk: “Lone Ranger”

Principle: As disciples of Jesus we have renounced our claim to our lives. Our individual goals and purpose has been grafted on to the body of Christ. Our worldview, priorities, goals and aspirations must build up the community of believers and the body of Christ.

Possible opening questions: (or come up with your own) the key is to get people thinking about how much popular culture influences the way we view ourselves and to create a gap between that view and the biblical view.

1. Have you ever dealt with the loss of a close friend or family member? What kinds of feelings did this create? Why do we feel this way? We identify and have relationships with people and are connected to them, when they are absent, something of us is also absent. This is natural and we feel loss because we are designed for connection.
2. Let's talk about some of the ways in which popular culture promotes the idea of individualism. Encourage the members to share about things like the examples below (or others)
 - The 'personalization' of shopping experience via the internet (saving preferences, targeted advertising via Google etc)
 - The 'pimp my ride' approach to life, every thing must be customized for my personal tastes, from cars to sandwiches to my PC, even the cover plate for my phone.
 - The proliferation of personal entertainment venues, "My" space, "I" pods, the "personal" computer
 - The use of 'alias' or screen names to protect our true identity so that we can be someone else in the virtual world all to gratify out personal desires and fantasies.

READ the text of 1 Cor. 12: 12-26

Key concept:

The idea of the church as analogous to a body, the connection of us to one another, the necessity of interdependence and reliance on the gifts and abilities of others to make us 'whole'

Why does Paul use this metaphor? What kind of relationships exist between the 'parts'? what happens when the parts become disjointed or detached? Consider our own bodies, what happens when we injury one part of it? (We limp, we compensate, we cry out, in some cases the entire body is compromised by an injury to some part)

Why do we resist reliance and connection with other people? (Difficult, inconvenient, causes me to have to consider the relational roles and not just my own role)

Look at vs. 15-17: Consider the absurdity of the proposition, a talking ear, a 'jealous' hand (perhaps because the feet wear Nike's!)

Following Paul's argument, what would cause the ear to say something like this? Have you ever wished you were something or someone else? Have you ever thought you were better off on your own in some key decision or part of your life?

Why do we think this way and what is influencing this kind of 'individualized' thinking?

Look at vs. 21-26: Consider the attitude “I don’t need you” Why do we think this way? What would make us think that we do not need others? (Pride, selfishness, ‘simplicity of life’)

Vs 22 and v 26 : how have we been taught to view weakness in our culture? Why are we afraid of being seen as weak or needy? (Have been let down before, afraid we will be manipulated or taken advantage of, weakness should be avoided, better to be alone than perceived as weak)

V 26 this is the goal of a healthy body or healthy community. All of us suffer together, all of us rejoice together, anything less is division in the body and is not what God commands.

Closing thought: When we behave as individuals and put our own interests above the community, we actually tear down the body of Christ. This is a spiritual issue. We need to honor the body and unity of Jesus above our own individual lives and preferences.

Challenge(s):

- We need to examine our worldview and make sure it is not idolatrous;
- Make sure that in our ‘individual’ lives we are not worshipping ourselves and our desires instead of Jesus.
- **Commit ourselves to one another and renounce the influences that lead us toward a warped view of self.**

Bible Talk: “I Want It Now!!!”

Ice Breaker: Play a game that involves a limited amount of time to perform an action.

Question: Has there ever been a time when you had to wait an extended period of time for something? When? Give us details...

How did that wait make you feel?

How was your behavior during that time of waiting?

The Title of our Bible Talk is “I Want It Now!”

Read 1 Sam 13:1-14

What was Saul’s problem in this text?

Why wasn’t he willing to wait on Samuel?

What does this teach us about Saul’s heart?

What does Saul’s impatience lead to?

What does Samuel mean when he says “A Man After God’s Heart”?

Can you think of a time in your life when you were not patient? (Not just with your kids)

Why did you lack patience during that time?

What did it lead to? What were the results of your impatience?

What was God’s expectation for you?

Why were you not able to live up to that expectation?

The key to all of this is the idea of patience. We have to be willing to wait on God in our lives. Be is something super spiritual and deep or something as simple as a meal. We need to trust that God is going to meet our needs.

The next time you are sitting at a restaurant and waiting for your meal, or you see something that you want but can’t afford, or you don’t see results right away, remember Saul. Learn from his bad example.

Ultimately, God will bless your patience and obedience to His word.

Bible Talk: “Bling-Bling”

Q. What does it mean to be successful?

Webster defines success as : a) degree or measure of succeeding b) favorable or desired outcome; also : the attainment of wealth, favor, or eminence c) one that succeeds

Q. Who are some successful people?

Let's look at a successful person in the bible. -- King Solomon

Ecclesiastes 2:1-10

Truly there is no one more successful than Solomon. Look at all his accomplishments.

Yet look at how he ended up. **vs.17-23**

Q. What did he realize at the end?

Here's his conclusion: **Ecc 12:13-14**

“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”

Jesus said in **Matt 6:33** to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to us as well.

Q: Are you chasing the idol of Success?

Let's stop chasing the “Bling-Bling”, and fear God while keeping His commandments instead.