

STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-21

A BIG SPENDER



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

DAVID MURRAY
JUNE 12, 2022 (PM)

INTRODUCTION

First Byron has multiple ministries and multiple members engaged in ministry. Sometimes ministry workers get discouraged and think about giving up. "Why am I doing this?" we ask. "I get very little return, receive very little thanks, and see very little fruit." If we're not tempted to give up, we're tempted to withdraw, to retreat, to reduce our efforts. "Why am I doing this ministry?" we ask. "Ministry is all give, give, give. I don't get much back. **Why should I do this ministry?**"

Or maybe you are sensing God's call to a ministry in the congregation or elsewhere. VBS? Sunday School? Small group leader? Perhaps someone has approached you and asked you to get involved in a ministry like this. It seems like a lot of time and effort and you too are asking yourself, "**Why should I do this ministry?**"

BACKGROUND

The Apostle Paul had many reasons to be discouraged about ministry to the Corinthian church. He had labored faithfully among them but they were turning away from Paul and to false teachers who undermined and demeaned Paul. He had many reasons to ask, "Why should I do this ministry?" Paul's view of ministry reminds us of why we should do ministry to others and why Jesus did ministry to us.



1. WE SPEND BIG (11-15)

You did not spend anything on me

"I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works. For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!" (11-13).

Paul hated commending himself but forced himself to do it, not for his own benefit, but for the Corinthians. He reminded them of all the proofs of his apostleship that were demonstrated among them as all the other churches. The only difference between the Corinthians and all the other New Testament churches, said Paul, was that he never took a penny from them. "Forgive me for not taking any money from you!" Paul exclaims with holy sarcasm. I did all I did for you and took nothing in return from you.

I spent everything on you

Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls... (14-15).

The Corinthians spent nothing on Paul, but he spent everything on them. He was self-funding his third missionary trip to them and asking not, "What can I get from the Corinthians?" but "How can I give to the Corinthians?" He wasn't wanting to benefit from their money but to benefit their souls. And he wasn't complaining about this, because it's normal for parents to provide for their children rather than vice versa. He viewed them with fatherly love, the love that spends not only money for the children but spends himself for the children. He was willing not only to give all that he had but all that he was for them. He would drain all his reserves for them.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Thank your spenders. Is there someone who served you or ministered to you in the past? have you thanked them? Pastors, parents, grandparents, Sunday school teachers, GEMS or Cadets leaders? We spent nothing on them, but they spent themselves for us. Have we expressed our appreciation?

Spend everything in ministry. Don't be a small spender; be a big spender. The more we spend in ministry or service, the more God will give us to spend. When we are motivated by the good of others, the profit of others, rather than our own gain, ministry and service will be a lot easier. We'll also see a lot more return on investment.

**BIG SPENDERS
ARE BIG SAVERS**



How do I become a big spender?
Become a big lover?



2. WE LOVE BIG (15-18)

I love you more

"If I love you more....But granting that I myself did not burden you, I was crafty, you say, and got the better of you by deceit. Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps? (15-18).

Here Paul may be saying either, "I love you more than the super-apostles," or "I love you more than I ever have before." Both were true. Both were proven by his actions. Not only had he never asked any money of them directly, he had never taken any advantage of them through his messengers and helpers. They followed Paul's example too in asking nothing and taking nothing from the Corinthians. Whatever the Corinthians said about Paul's deceit, he appeals to his actions to prove his love was entirely uninterested in getting but only in giving.

You love me less

If I love you more, am I to be loved less? (15).

This wasn't a question seeking new information, but a rhetorical question that implied the answer "Yes." As the NKJV puts it, "Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved." The comparison may either be "You love me less than the super-apostles" or "You love me less than you did before." You can feel the agony of this question, can't you? Paul was loving them more and more, at the same time as he was experiencing less and less love in return.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Prepare for less love. How many parents, pastors, elders, ministry workers, teachers, etc., have experienced this? Our love is returned with hate. Our good words are met with evil words. Our good deeds are misrepresented and twisted. The worst motives are attributed to our best service.

Ask for more love. Instead of returning evil for evil, we are to return love for hate, and good for evil. We go to the Lord and say, "He/she/they hate me more than ever before. Help me to love more than ever before."

MORE HATE
= MORE LOVE



If that's our motive to spend,
what's our aim in spending?



3. WE BUILD BIG (19-21)

I'm not building myself up

Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? (19)

Paul's been forced into defending himself, but his aim in this is not so much to rebuild his reputation (although that's involved). It's like the best pharmacy which receives an unfair Google review that could damage its' customers' confidence and make them get their meds elsewhere. Its manager goes online to write a rebuttal of the review by setting the record straight. It's not primarily about defending the pharmacy's reputation (though that's involved). It's more about defending the customers' interests and health.

I'm building you up

It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved (19).

Paul appealed to God's knowledge of his heart motive being not to build his reputation but to build up the Corinthians. And they were in dire need of rebuilding. From all that Paul had heard about the impact of the false teachers, the Corinthians' spirituality had been demolished.

For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. 21 I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced (20-21).

At that moment, their imminent reunion with Paul did not look like being a happy occasion. If he came and found them broken down and dilapidated, Paul would be deeply humbled and immensely sad. That's why he wrote this letter, so that they would clear the rubble by repentance and rebuild by faith and godliness.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Selfish ministry is self-ministry. If we do what we do for our own reputation alone, for fame, respect, praise of others, we are not serving others or the Lord, but ourselves. And the end of that will be destruction of the church and of ourselves as the super-apostles proved.

Add a brick. We may not build a cathedral, but we can add another brick to another life. We can be scaffolding for a time. We can carry drinks. We can encourage the other builders. We're not called to build a monument, but to build moment by moment.

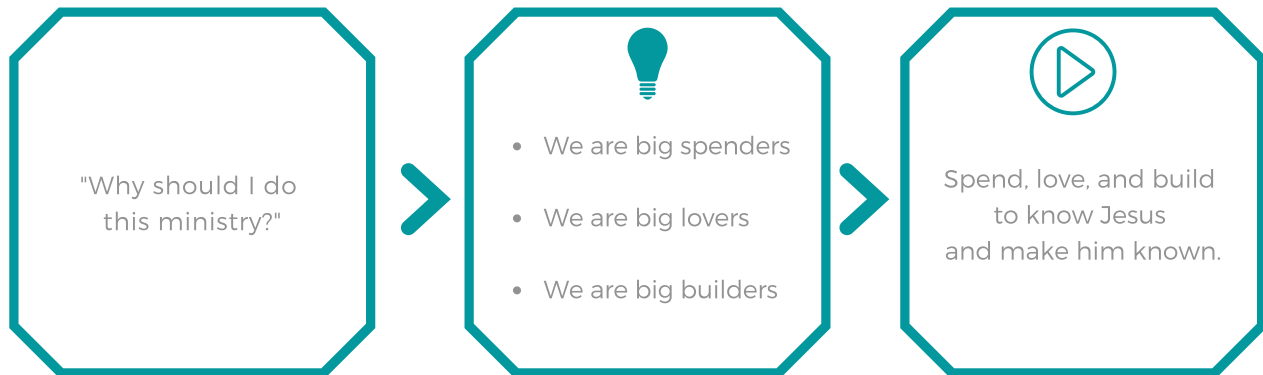
BUILD OTHERS
OR DESTROY SELF



Hear God's Story > Change our story > Tell the Story > Change others' stories



SUMMARY



A NEW CHAPTER

- **Jesus:** Who can read these verses without thinking about Jesus as the biggest spender, the biggest lover, and the biggest builder? No matter how close we or Paul come to being big spenders, big lovers, and big builders, we are all mini-spenders, mini-lovers, and mini-builders compared to Jesus and his ministry to us.
- **Discipleship:** As followers of Jesus we are called to a life of spending, loving, and building for the glory of God and the good of others. We need not expect any different experience to that of Jesus or Paul. But think of what could be built by our service and ministry.
- **Gospel:** How many have served you over the years? How many have spent themselves, loved you, and tried to build you up? And what's the return been? Does God see a demolition site? He's still sending you spenders, lovers, and builders.
- **Prayer:** Greatest Spender, Lover, and Builder, continue to minister to me so that I may minister to others by investing in them, loving them, and building no matter their response.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When have you been tempted to give up ministry or to avoid it? Why?
2. What ministry is God calling you to continue or to begin?
3. Who have been the spenders, lovers, and builders in your life? Have you thanked them?
4. Who can you invest in, love, or build up?
5. How did this message increase your love for Jesus?
6. Who can you disciple with this message?

First Byron Christian Reformed Church
8541 Byron Center Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49315
Phone: (616) 878-9768
www.firstbyroncrc.org

Pastor David Murray
www.HeadHeartHand.org
www.thestorychanger.life