

GROWTH GROUP GUIDE

WEEK 3 | A CANNONBALL OF SACRIFICE, DAVID

MAIN IDEA FOR THOUGHT

When you do a Cannonball, you become completely immersed in the water and are no longer dry. Even your hair gets messed up! For many of us, this is a huge step of faith. A Cannonball symbolizes that we've left things behind on the edge of the pool and jumped in towards what is ahead. Through this Initiative, God is asking us to give in a way that changes us. Truly doing this requires us to realize that we must give up some things we love for someone we love more. Sacrifice will look different for each one of us. But as we each simply listen to the Holy Spirit and then respond obediently we know our goals will be accomplished.

Watch Week 3 Video

OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Parents are often great "sacrificERS". It's part of the job description. What is something you remember your parents sacrificing for you? Maybe you discovered it later on as an adult? What is something you've sacrificed for your children?
- 2) Have you ever sacrificed, given up something good, for something or someone? Perhaps you went back to school and gave up your days off. Or maybe you passed on a promotion to stay home more. Was that sacrifice worth it? Did everyone else (coworkers, friends, etc.) see it the way you did?
- 3) Is there something that would be very difficult to give up – something that if you were asked to give it up, you're not sure that you could?

FURTHER DISCUSSION FROM SCRIPTURE

Read each Scripture passage below and discuss the questions as a group. You may want to have each group member journal their answer first in the lines provided below before discussing together, as a means of encouraging all to participate more deeply.

Sacrifice will always cost something

2 SAMUEL 24:18-25

That day Gad came to David and said to him, "Go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." So David went up to do what the Lord had commanded him. When Araunah saw the king and his men coming toward him, he came and bowed before the king with his face to the ground. "Why have you come, my lord the king?" Araunah asked. David replied, "I have come to buy your threshing floor and to build an altar to the Lord there, so that he will stop the plague." "Take it, my lord the king, and use it as you wish," Araunah said to David. "Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and you can use the threshing boards and ox yokes for wood to build a fire on the altar. I will give it all to you, Your Majesty, and may the Lord your God accept your sacrifice." But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on buying it, for I will not present burnt offerings to the Lord my God that have cost me nothing." So David paid him fifty pieces of silver for the threshing floor and the oxen. David built an altar there to the Lord and sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings. And the Lord answered his prayer for the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.

Sacrifice by its very nature will always cost something. In this passage, David is building an altar for the Lord and he insists on paying for the land & oxen. He does not want to present an offering that cost him nothing. True generosity is not about an amount, it's about sacrifice. A wealthy person can give a large amount to a

non-profit and it does not necessarily mean it was a generous gift. Only the giver knows if it was generous based on how much it "cost them". Have you ever given to something or someone sacrificially? What would it take for you to truly give in this way?

Sacrifice begins in the heart

1 SAMUEL 13:1-14

Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty two years. Saul chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Mikmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent back to their homes. Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said, "Let the Hebrews hear!" So all Israel heard the news: "Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel has become obnoxious to the Philistines." And the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal. The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Mikmash, east of Beth Aven. When the Israelites saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering. Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Mikmash, I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering." "You have done a foolish thing," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command."

Has there been a time in your story or area of your life where, like Saul, you were not patient or didn't trust God and "took matters into your own hands"? How did that work out?

Never forget God cares about our heart more than our offering. Everything God does is about a relationship with us and his to desire to transform us into who he created us to be. How might sacrificial giving from the heart make us more like Jesus?

The power of generosity and giving from what we have

EXODUS 35:20-24, 29, 36:2-7

Moses shares the vision of a Temple for God to the people of Israel. Read what happened as God's people responded to Moses vision and invitation to give.

Chapter 35: So the whole community of Israel left Moses and returned to their tents. All whose hearts were stirred and whose spirits were moved came and brought their sacred offerings to the Lord. They brought all the materials needed for the Tabernacle, for the performance of its rituals, and for the sacred garments. Both men and women came, all whose hearts were willing. They brought to the Lord their offerings of gold—brooches, earrings, rings from their fingers, and necklaces. They presented gold objects of every kind as a special offering to the Lord. All those who owned the following items willingly brought them: blue, purple, and scarlet thread; fine linen and goat hair for cloth; and tanned ram skins and fine goatskin leather. And all who had silver and bronze objects gave them as a sacred offering to the Lord. And those who had acacia wood brought it for use in the project. So the people of Israel—every man and woman who was eager to help in the work the Lord had given them through Moses—brought their gifts and gave them freely to the Lord.

Chapter 36: So Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and all the others who were specially gifted by the Lord and were eager to get to work. Moses gave them the materials donated by the people of Israel as sacred offerings for the completion of the sanctuary. But the people continued to bring additional gifts each morning. Finally the craftsmen who were working on the sanctuary left their work. They went to Moses and reported, "The people have given more than enough materials to complete the job the Lord has commanded us to do!" So Moses gave the command, and this message was sent throughout the camp: "Men and women, don't prepare any more gifts for the sanctuary. We have enough!" So the people stopped bringing their sacred offerings. Their contributions were more than enough to complete the whole project.

The remarkable thing in this passage is the multitude of different types of gifts that were given for the construction of the tabernacle—jewelry, garments, wood, skilled labor. Whatever each person had to offer, they gave from what they already had. Often our first objection to giving opportunities is to say that we can't give because we don't make enough extra money. How does this idea of giving out of "stored resources" (what you already have and own) change the way you think about your giving opportunities?

Take a moment and think, maybe even list the resources you have purchased or that you have in your possession (home, electronics, season tickets, jewelry, cars, vacation home, boat, etc.) Do you honor God with those resources? How could you do better at that? (Using your home to bless your neighbors & friends through hospitality, sharing or giving an extra vehicle to a friend, etc.)

The people of Israel gave so generously that Moses had to stop the giving because it was too much! The workers building the temple said "we have more than enough"! Wouldn't that be awesome if our collective generosity resulted in us having more than enough resources to do everything we dream through this Cannonball Initiative? Join us in praying that this could happen!

CLOSING PRAYER

God, we know you can do exceedingly more than we can ever ask and imagine. Help us put our complete trust in you. Help us see all that you've already given us and be willing step out in faith as we respond to you. Amen. ■

