

# REDISCOVER MACEDONIA

A spirit of gratitude and generosity



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

## ***A Biblical Conversation with 2 Corinthians 7:16—8:7*** Participant Handout



### ***Devotional Reading (No experts ... thank you very much!)***

Devotional reading invites all of us to set aside our expertise or our lack of knowledge and let the passage from the Bible seep into our hearts, minds and souls both personally and in community.

- What word or phrase strikes you, and where does it take you?
- What images or stories or memories come to mind?
  - *When were you asked to be generous? What reasons were given?*
- What confuses or challenges you?
  - *Who are the most generous, those who have more or those who have less?*
- What is God calling us to be, to do, or to tell?

### ***Historical Reading (Who..., When..., Where..., Why..., What?)***

Historical reading grows out of the understanding that our Bible is, among many other things, an ancient text, written in a different time and place by and for people with sensibilities and experiences quite different from our own. We can gain insights for our present context through better understanding the ancient context.

- What insights from history would be helpful to know in order to hear, read, study or understand this passage more accurately?
- Who wrote this letter? When? From where? To whom?
- What about the original context would you like to know?
  - *Exercise: Place an asterisk where you might want a study note.*
- Do we know anything about Paul's situation when he wrote this passage?
- Do we know anything about the situation of the Corinthians?
- Do we know anything else helpful about that part of the ancient world?

*The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me ... A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or a cardinal without it.*

— Martin Luther, quoted in “Martin Luther—The Early Years,”  
Christian History Magazine 2:34; Christianity Today International, 1993: 28.

### **Literary Reading (How do we find meaning in the details of this text?)**

A literary reading is one in which we look at a text as a written text and we attend to the details and nuances of the text, believing that meaning can be found deeply within the text.

- Literary Type: What is a letter? What kind of letter is this one?
- Literary Context: What comes before and after our passage?
- Literary Use of Language: What themes are important?

*Exercise: Underline the repeated or important words or phrases.*

*What do you notice?*

- Seek a little help concerning repeated and important words in the Greek text including **charis**, **perisseia/perisseuo**, **koinonia**, and **diakonia**
- Literary Shape

*Exercise: Summarize Paul's argument in this passage. How is he trying to persuade the ones reading the letter to be generous? How does Paul's argument work on us today?*

*These are the Scriptures which make fools of all the wise and understanding, and are open only to the small and simple, as Christ says in Matthew 11:25. Therefore dismiss your own opinions and feelings, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored, in order that you may find divine wisdom which God here lays before you in such simple guise as to quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling clothes and the manger in which Christ lies.*

— Martin Luther, “Luther’s Works,” vol. 35: Prefaces to the Old Testament, 236.

### **Lutheran Theological Reading (How is God speaking to us?)**

A Lutheran theological reading brings questions to the text rising out of particular insights from our Lutheran heritage that can help us engage the Bible anew in each time and place.

- In what ways do we hear this passage as law?
- In what ways do we hear this passage as gospel? What is the good news for our church and world today?
- How does this passage show forth Christ, birth Christ in us?
- How might others hear this passage, especially people from cultures, traditions, or age groups different from my own?
- How does this passage move us from God’s salvation to our vocation? What are we called to do in response to what God has done for us?

*It is for Christ's sake that we believe in the Scriptures, but it is not for the Scriptures' sake that we believe in Christ.*

— Martin Luther (1483-1546)

## Respectful Communications Guidelines

Eric Law, Kaleidoscope Institute, [www.kscopeinstitute.org/index.html](http://www.kscopeinstitute.org/index.html)

R = take **Responsibility** for what you say and feel without blaming others

E = use **Empathetic** listening

S = be **Sensitive** to differences in communication styles

P = **Ponder** what you hear and feel before you speak

E = **Examine** your own assumptions and perceptions

C = keep **Confidentiality**

T = **Trust** ambiguity, because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong

2 Corinthians 7:16—8:7	Your Reflections
<p><sup>7:16</sup> I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.</p> <p><b>8:1</b> We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; <sup>2</sup> for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup> For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, <sup>4</sup> begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints-- <sup>5</sup> and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, <sup>6</sup> so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. <sup>7</sup> Now as you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you-- so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.</p>	

*“The Holy Scriptures require a humble reader who shows reverence and fear toward the Word of God, and constantly says,*

*‘Teach me, teach me, teach me .... The Spirit resists the proud.’*

— Martin Luther, “Luther’s Works,” vol.54: Table Talk, 379.