

## Cell Notes - Autumn Term 2015 (Suggested dates weeks beginning 20th, 28th Sept, 4th & 11th Oct)

Series on Giving and Stewardship

### Week One

#### The Generosity of God

##### Welcome:

Think of an example of extreme generosity that you have either heard about or experienced personally - and share this with the group.

##### Worship:

*God so loved... that he gave...* (John 3:16)

The best-known verse in the Bible is about God's generosity! Think about this!

Spend a short time in prayer offering your gratitude to God for both his spiritual and material blessings.

Sing a song/s of thanksgiving to God - as you sing focus on something specific you are grateful for.

##### Word:

Read **Psalm 65**

King David lived with a keen awareness of God's generosity.

Go through the psalm and pick out all the ways in which God 'opened his hands' to David and the people of Israel.

Notice some of the words used to describe God's generosity - what do they tell us about the nature of this generosity?

What other specific examples of God's generosity can you think of from elsewhere in the Bible?

How might we increase our own awareness (and appreciation) of God's generosity?

##### Witness:

Pray for people and situations which are in need of some form of generosity.

Challenge each other to respond to God's generosity to you by being purposefully generous (financially or otherwise) to others over the week ahead. Come to next week's meeting ready to report on how this went as part of the welcome next week - how did people react and how did it make you feel?

Share out who is going to lead the Welcome, Word, Worship and Witness sections next week.

##### Optional:

Write your own psalm, poem or prayer responding to God's generosity - if you would like to, bring it along to share with the cell next week. (If art is more your thing, you can draw or paint a picture!)

## Week Two

### Money - why does it matter to God?

#### Welcome:

Last week the group were challenged to respond to God's generosity to you by being purposefully generous (financially or otherwise) to others over the week ahead. Report on how this went - how did people react and how did it make you feel?  
(NB If you didn't focus on this last week, share a different occasion when you made an effort to be generous and how people responded)

#### Word:

The Bible contains a huge amount on the subject of wealth. Our attitude towards it and how we use it is important. In what way do you see your own use of money as a spiritual activity?

#### Read **Luke 3:7-14**

What, according to this passage, is 'fruit in keeping with repentance'? (vv 11, 13 & 14)  
You might also like to look at and comment on Luke 19:8-10  
How has your attitude towards money changed since becoming a Christian?

#### Read **Mark 12:41-44**

What was Jesus doing according to v41?  
What did the widow's giving reveal about her relationship with the Lord?  
How did her gift compare with the gifts of the rich people?  
What do you think Jesus felt about this woman's giving?

#### Worship:

Play some instrumental music quietly in the background and ask the group to close their eyes and listen while someone reads aloud **Mark 14:3-9**. (Read slowly! It may help to leave a slightly longer than usual pause after each full stop.)  
Spend some time in silent contemplation, moving into spoken prayer (arising out of the reading/contemplation) if that seems appropriate.

#### Witness Together:

Continue to pray for people and situations which are in need of some form of generosity. Discuss- are there people who could benefit from the generosity of your cell working together? This could mean offering practical help e.g. with someone's garden, babysitting, shopping or cooking or it could mean running a coffee morning for a charity - plan or begin to plan how you can witness to God's generosity together.

Share out who is going to lead the Welcome, Word, Worship and Witness sections next week.

### PERSONAL WITNESS

Billy Graham said; 'Your bank statement is a theological document'!  
Keep a journal about (or pay close attention to) how you use your money this week. At the end of the week make a rough estimate of the proportions of your spending/saving/giving. Did you discover anything surprising about your use of your income? (The purpose of this exercise is not to make you feel guilty - just to raise your awareness of what you do with your money.) Talk to God about your finances...  
NB This challenge is a personal one - we will not discuss this in the group next time

## Week Three

### Giving and Tithing - aka 'God owns all the doughnuts!'

(This aka will only make sense if you watch the jjohn clip - it runs for 6.29 minutes)

#### Welcome:

If possible show the following clip to the group (sorry this is not a link - you'll need to key it in):

[www.canonjjohn.com/media/video/32/doughnuts](http://www.canonjjohn.com/media/video/32/doughnuts)

Do you recognise this whole area - our attitude towards and use of money/possessions - as being a matter of discipleship?

#### Word:

There is a lot to look at this week - so don't linger too long on this first passage.

Read **1 Chronicles 29:1-20**

What characterised the giving described here?

Read **Malachi 3:6-12**

How does God describe the lack of giving in this passage?

What else in the passage indicates the strength of God's feelings about this?

Read **Luke 11:42** and **Matthew 23:23**

These verses indicate that Jesus saw tithing as the norm and encouraged its practice.

However, he made the point that tithing should never be a substitute for living in God's way of love, mercy and justice.

Read **2 Corinthians 8:1-7**

What was their financial state? (v2)

How did they give? (v3)

What do verses 3, 4 & 7 say about giving?

#### Worship:

If you've felt particularly challenged by this week's session, or if you realise this has been an area of discipleship that you've neglected, you may want to offer a few moments of silent confession. Accept God's forgiveness and resolve to live more generously in response to his love.

Express your worship to God in song, perhaps with something like:

'I will offer up my life' or 'Take my life and let it be'

#### Witness Together:

Read the personal witness challenge aloud to the group. Give time for any questions or discussion. (If questions arise that need an answer, please arrange to invite someone from the Cell Church Trustees to answer these)

Then pray together for God's help in this area of personal witness

Last week you began to discuss situations who could benefit from the generosity of your cell working together. (eg. offering practical help e.g. with someone's garden, babysitting, shopping or cooking or it could mean running a coffee morning for a charity)- Continue from where you left off and pray for God's guidance and help as you seek to witness to God's generosity as a group.

Share out who is going to lead the Welcome, Word, Worship and Witness sections next week.

### Week Three: Giving and Tithing - aka 'God owns all the doughnuts!' continued...

**PERSONAL WITNESS:** Set aside sometime this week to review your giving. If you have not already done so, consider setting up a way to give a planned regular amount to your the cell church (or to your home church if this is not cell) Take away a cell church giving leaflet.

We may not be in a position to tithe fully if we do not earn, but most of us have some form of income (even pocket money/allowance etc!). Consider how we could allocate even a small amount to regular giving.

Be open to opportunities for spontaneous and sacrificial giving...within and beyond the 'boundaries' of church.

Be prayerful and discerning in what you choose to sponsor or which charities you give to - we cannot support everything that comes our way but God will guide our giving if we listen to him!

Remember in addition, there are other ways to give that don't involve money, eg giving of our time, possessions, skills etc

## **Week Four: Stewardship - wealth management for life**

### **Welcome:**

God calls us to be good stewards of all he has entrusted to our care. This involves being 'open handed' and generous, not allowing ourselves to be pulled in to the mentality of excess, accumulation, or hoarding. In today's increasingly materialistic society, this can be quite a challenge! Give examples of some well-known adverts and say why you think they are so powerful/effective/persuasive.

### **Word:**

#### **Matthew 6:19-34**

How can we protect ourselves from a materialistic mindset?  
How do we store up treasures in heaven?

#### **1 Timothy 6:10 & 17-19**

What exactly is the root of all evil? (nb this is not a one word answer!)  
What do vv 17-18 tell us about our priorities?  
What will be the result of obedience in this area (v19)?

#### **Matthew 25:31-46**

What emotions does this passage stir in you?  
How would your life be different if you were more consciously aware of serving Jesus in and through every act of love and kindness to others?

### **Worship:**

Place a few items representing your wealth on a table (or on the floor) where all can see. If people are willing have them place eg house keys, car keys, cheque books, bank cards, wallets etc or a piece of paper with a written list/drawings of such items into the centre. You could include a map of the world, local village magazine, newspaper etc. Give thanks in prayer for all God has given to you - then recommit everything to him, acknowledging that he owns it all. Thank him for the privilege of being entrusted with the care of so much and ask for wisdom in your stewardship.

Song suggestions: 'Make me a channel' or 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God'

### **Witness Together:**

Over the last couple of weeks, you have begun to respond to situations who could benefit from the generosity of your cell working together. (eg. offering practical help e.g. with someone's garden, babysitting, shopping or cooking or it could mean running a coffee morning for a charity)- Continue with this and pray for God's guidance and help as you seek to witness to God's generosity as a group.

Share out who is going to lead the Welcome, Word, Worship and Witness sections next week.

### **Personal Witness:**

- Avoid unnecessary debt. Seek help with budgeting if necessary. (Your cell leader or the clergy can help you find someone to help you if you don't know where to start)
- Think about your shopping habits. Do you buy Fair Trade/ ethically produced goods? Local produce tends to be kinder on the environment as less transportation involved in getting goods to shops, which cuts down on fuel, pollution etc
- Remember to 'Reduce! Reuse! Recycle!'
- God blesses us so that we can bless others... be intentional in how you do this as part of your daily and ongoing response to God.