

## **Life Group Leader Guide #16**

7/9/17

### **Why Don't We Give?**

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During the month of July we are planning to focus on the practice of giving. Giving is, indeed, a spiritual practice. In giving, we are declaring that others are more deserving of what we already possess, and therefore we are esteeming their interests above our own. In this way, we mirror Christ's self-giving love (Philippians 2:3-11).

To introduce this idea, however, we need to look at what is going on at the root of all giving. We can coerce people to give by calling it a necessary "act of worship" or placing some burden of guilt on them, and churches often have done this. I think this is a flawed way to approach giving because it does nothing for the heart of the giver, and ultimately reduces the significance of the gift. Instead, the giver should give out of a transformed heart, and from a place of love for God and others. Simply put: our giving should reflect Christ's giving.

We know that we are called to be a giving, generous people. The early church made a regular practice of giving everything they had for the work of the church, for the poor, and other causes. As has already been said, Jesus modeled a life of generosity. So, why is it that Christians often aren't known for our generous giving?

I think one of the primary reasons for this is that giving involves releasing our control. The more things we have, the more we are able to keep the illusion that we are in control of something. This goes not only for material things, but also power, prestige, positions, and authority. The more we value these things, the less we want to let them go—they cause us to be selfish and to live in/for the comfort of control.

Jesus, however, models the opposite mentality. He had everything: equality with God, power, authority—you name it! Still, He gave it up. He emptied himself, and gave to people who surely did not deserve it. Before we can learn to give like Christ, we must adopt the same attitude. We must be willing to give up our love of control in favor of submission to others. If Jesus can empty himself, giving up his "godness", surely we can learn to trust God enough to give up the little things that make us feel like we are in control.

## **Discussion Guide**

**Opening Question:** What often holds us back from giving when we have the opportunity?

### **Bible Study:**

- Luke 18:18-25
  1. Based on this description, if you encountered this man, would he seem like a good person to you?
  2. Why do you think the ruler had this feeling that he lacked something?
  3. Why do you think being rich makes it difficult to enter the kingdom of God? Is it wrong just to be rich?
- Acts 4:32-37; Acts 5:1-11
  1. What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira? What was their motive in giving?
  2. Was it wrong for them to not give the entire sum of their profits? Why or why not?
  3. Notice 4:32. Would you be comfortable viewing your private possessions the same way? Why or why not? What would hold us back from giving like this church?
- Philippians 2:3-11; James 4:10
  1. What did Jesus give up so that others would be saved?
  2. Who has the control when we look to the interests of others instead of our own?
  3. What was the ultimate outcome of Jesus's humble submission and giving up his glory? Does God recognize us when we do the same? What do you think it means when James says God will "lift us up"?

### **Further Discussion:**

1. What has caused you to give beyond your comfort zone in the past? Why did this motivate you to do so?
2. Does Jesus's command to the "rich young ruler" in Luke 18 trouble you? Why or why not? What if Jesus had said this to you?
3. Reflect for a moment on what you would be afraid to let go of—perhaps a possession, position, etc. Share with the group if you would like to do so.