

Series - Going Deeper – Living Generously

Date/s - 17 March 2019

Scripture - 2 Corinthians 8:5-15, 9:7-13

Speaker - Pastor Ben KC Lee

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like “O Praise The Name”, “Here As In Heaven”, “Goodness Of God” or “You Are Good”.

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Reflect on the different motivations behind our giving; and
2. Be encouraged to grow in our nature to give to God out of an act of worship.

Word [45 min]

Pastor Ben preached about living generously as believers, from 2 Corinthians 8:5-15, 9:7-13.

Pastor expounded on five motivations behind giving:

First motivation: Guilt (“Have to” giving)

- Pastor Ben shared that the strength of this approach would be that guilt can be effective in bringing in some money.
- However, its weakness remains that it is unbiblical- It brings no joy and doesn’t help people outgrow materialism. Pastor Ben emphasized that attitudes matter to God. We should not give reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:7).

Second motivation: Responsibility (“Ought to” giving)

- Pastor Ben shared that this approach feels better than the guilt motivation, and in the process, we learn responsibility (refer to 2 Cor 8:7, which implies a level of responsibility about giving).
- The drawback of this motive is that giving solely out of responsibility limits the joy and the amount given considerably. Duty can imply an obligation, a lack of choice, and an undesirable sacrifice. Life is so much more fulfilling if we can learn to live with joy and (eternal) purpose!

Third motivation: Needs (“Want to” giving)

- The advantage of this approach is that giving to satisfy needs, feels good personally. You often can immediately see the impact of your gift. This feels great, because the gift has served a purpose, often impacts people’s lives directly, and solves a problem. Pastor Ben also shared that Paul illustrated the importance of letting the church know about financial concerns and giving opportunities (2 Cor 8:13-15).
- However, the truth remains that some people will not approve of or see the need. As such it provides a very subjective baseline.

Fourth motivation: Thanksgiving (“Can’t Help It” giving)

- Pastor Ben shared from 2 Cor 9:13, teaching that giving is a way of thanking and praising God for all that He has done for us. Being generous can affirm the worth of the person or ministry, as it acknowledges that they are worthy of generosity, or over and above giving, which is a great way to say, “thank you.”

- Yet, once more, this motivation is limited by our personal and subjective perception of thankfulness.

Fifth motivation: Worship (“It’s my nature” giving)

- Pastor Ben preached from 2 Cor 8:5. Even under the pressure and affliction of persecution and poverty, the Macedonian Christians “gave themselves first to the Lord.” Their financial decisions flowed out of their relationship with the Father, as they responded generously to the needs of others, abounding in joy and demonstrating the mercies received from God. They even begged to have the privilege of sharing financially in Paul’s ministry! Likewise, when it is our nature to give to God, giving becomes:

- o An act of worship
- o A confession of the gospel (2 Cor 9:13)
- o An act of trust (1 Tim 6:17-19)
- o An offering to God (Philippians 4:18)

There are only strengths to this motivation.

Pastor Ben concluded his sermon with an exhortation to increase our respective level of giving. As we spend time in God’s presence, He can refine us and burn out impurities, such as selfishness. As we make God our focus, we adopt His desires and priorities as our own.

Discussion Questions

1. **Why did our Lord make wealth the subject of so many of his parables and sermons? Why do you think being generous is important to our Lord?** [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: *This is a recap question. Our giving acknowledges the Lordship of Christ in our lives and Him as our Source. As Christians, we worship a generous God, whose nature is to give, freely and without measure, to the whole world. (“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” John 3:16) Jesus is God’s love gift to the world. God could not have loved more. As we meditate on who God is and on His character, we will be challenged to be like our heavenly Father and model his generosity.*

Also, it is important to make investments in eternity. When we give to God, we are giving of ourselves. After all, we spend so much time in our lives trying to make money. Further, investing in heavenly purposes ensures that it will never be stolen or destroyed (Matthew 6:19-21).

2. **Of the five motivations taught by Pastor Ben, which motive guides you most in your giving?** [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: *A relate question. Members can spend some time examining their attitudes towards tithing or any other forms of monetary giving. After that, leaders can get members to share on how they are moved to give to various good causes, and what are some principles or guidelines different ones follow. It may be helpful if members can share specific occasions whereby, they feel led to respond in a practical way to someone’s financial need, and the cell can identify any strengths and weaknesses to the approach employed in such instance.*

Notes to Cell Leader:

Financial Assistance

If a cell member is facing a serious financial challenge or beyond the cell to help, he or she may be eligible for the Acts 2 Fund. This fund was set up to provide financial assistance to regular worshippers of RiverLife Church (RLC), who have been worshipping regularly at RLC for at least 6 months, regardless of membership status, race or citizenship. For more details, refer to the application form which is available at the Information Counter at the RLC Atrium.

Overcoming Debt

If a cell member is in significant debt and wants to move out debt and into a budget, consult your zone pastor or zone overseer. Either your ZP/ZO will help personally or help to identify a trustworthy person who will be able to coach your cell member in drawing up a plan to get out debt and get into a budget.

3. **Read 2 Corinthians 8: 3 - 5. To what extent have you caught the generosity of spirit, to give out of worship to God? What are some struggles preventing you from giving even more generously?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: A reflect question. Members can break into small groups to share about where they are at in their giving journey, and any personal barriers they are facing. We are called to "present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship" (see Romans 12:1). As we offer ourselves to God, our whole life becomes worship. We are renewed and moulded into the image of God, no longer conforming to the worldly pressures of materialism and consumerism. God's values will shape every aspect of our lives, including our attitude to money. We don't give to gain the blessing of God, but we give simply because generosity is a natural outcome of living in the Spirit. We are to heed the truth that where our hearts are, there our treasures will lie- true wealth is not to be found in shoring up earthly possessions, but in a life surrendered to Him and making His name great.

4. **How has this study and reflection changed your thoughts on stewardship? What steps do you need to take to "excel in the grace of giving"?** (2 Corinthians 8:7) [10 min]

Leader's Notes: A response question. Knowing the biblical motivation for giving, we can now think of giving in terms of excitement, trust and joy! We can look to Jesus, who, though He was rich, became poor, that we might live. Members can break into groups to pray for each other to daily grow in the grace of giving, to be like the Corinth Christians.

If time allows, members can also pray corporately for wisdom for our leadership, as they seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit in allocating our gifts (God's money) to meet needs. Believers in the early church had many needs, and in Scripture, we see that leadership and organisation were necessary to properly administer benevolence. God is a God of order. The body of Christ has different parts with different gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-8), and some are better suited to this responsibility. We need to submit to our church leadership in implementing established benevolence policies and be willing to be guided by the church leadership to respond to areas of need.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. We will give generously towards His Kingdom with heart of faith and love.

Announcement

1. **Joining the Family, Saturday, 30 Mar | 1:30 – 4:30pm | Faith Chapel**

Joining the Family class will help you to understand God's heart for the Church and His call for us to be identified with a local body of believers. This is a pre-requisite for Associate Membership. Sign up at the Information Counter or online at bit.ly/rlcjoiningthefamily by Sun, 24 Mar.

Church Vision:

A radiant disciple-making church catalysing Kingdom transformation in our communities and the nations.

Mission:

We exist to make disciples who behold Christ and reveal Him.