

The logo consists of two overlapping speech bubbles. The left one is blue and contains the word 'Small' in white. The right one is red and contains the word 'Groups' in white. Below the speech bubbles, the words 'DISCUSSION GUIDE' are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Small Groups

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Grace Giving
Pastor Mike Hayes
Sunday May 6, 2018

Main Idea – The desire and commitment to give are blessings from God. The grace to give manifests in us through certain steps, and from practice.

An imaginary life

- Can you imagine your life with no financial strain on your resources, where you are out of debt, all your needs are met, and you have the desire and ability to help others in need?
- That scenario is not a dream, but is actually God's desire for you.
- Satan has successfully prevented most of us from even hoping for such a life through poor personal health decisions and poor personal financial decisions.
- Because of poor personal health and financial decisions, many believers are unable to activate God's gift of giving.

Giving is a gift from the Holy Spirit

- Grace and giving are connected.
- Giving is a blessing from the Holy Spirit. It comes as an act of grace from God.
- **2 Corinthians 8:7 – Since you excel in so many ways – in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us – I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving. NLT**
- It is God's desire that we are able to excel at giving.
- But, this doesn't automatically happen.

Giving results from a process

- Giving takes practice. We must continually train ourselves to give, because our fleshly nature resists generosity.
- Giving happens from a process of distinct steps.

The steps to excel at giving

- Get out of debt. This requires a financial strategy and time.
- Create a personal budget to live on.
- Break the spirit of materialism (narcissism) that may have hold of you.

Materialism

- Jesus said He would not trust with heavenly blessings those who have not proven they can be trusted with earthly wealth.
- **Luke 16:11 – “And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?” NLT**
- To paraphrase, Jesus was saying He was going to measure how much He gives us through the Spirit by observing how we spend our money. If we don't know how to properly handle our earthly treasure, how can He trust us to be good stewards of more important things?

A new way of thinking

- Every great advancement of science, and in human history, has required a change of mindset.
- In order to receive the gift of giving, we must recognize that everything on earth belongs to God. We are simply stewards over some of it for a short period of time. We, personally, do not own anything.
- **Ecclesiastes 5:15 – We all come to the end of our lives as naked and empty-handed as on the day we were born. We can't take our riches with us. NLT**
- The pastor and author Eugene Peterson shares the story of a mother bird teaching her babies to fly by forcing them off the security of the branch. If they had not been forced off the branch, the baby birds never would have experienced their full potential. *“Some of us try desperately to hold on to ourselves, to live for ourselves. We look so bedraggled and pathetic doing it, hanging on to the dead branch of a bank account for dear life, afraid to risk ourselves on the untried wings of giving. We don't think we can live generously because we have never tried. But the sooner we start the better, for we are going to have to give up our lives finally, and the longer we wait the less time we have for the soaring and swooping life of grace.”*
— Eugene H. Peterson, *Run with the Horses: The Quest for Life at Its Best*

Be a good manager of what you now have

- **1 Corinthians 16: 1-2 – Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. NKJV**
- Start by giving proportionally. The amount you return to God for the work of the Church should be in proportion to what you have made. This is fair for everyone.
- Practice managing your money, your time, and your heart.
- Pray to receive grace to spend your resources on what matters eternally.

- We were not created to live limited lives. We are called by the Holy Spirit to “fly” and accomplish great things that really matter.

Reflective Questions for Grace Giving

1. At the beginning of this message, Pastor Mike asked us to imagine a life where we would be without the pressure of financial constraints, and would be free to give our money & time to helping others. He believes such a life is possible. Do you agree or disagree?
2. Do you believe such a life is possible for you personally? Why or why not?
3. In your own words define “materialism.” How big of a problem is materialism? Why is materialism a major impediment to receiving spiritual authority? (See Luke 16:11 above.)
4. 2 Corinthians 8:7 (above) shows that God’s grace, and our giving, are connected. Can you explain why this connection is a spiritual truth and, therefore, a fact of life?

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