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**GENEROSITY**

**GROUP LEADERS BOOKLET**

 

**A STUDY BY NATIONAL GENEROSITY NETWORK**

**INDIA**

**PREFACE**

This study is the outcome of two conferences on Generosity held in Bangalore in 2013 and 2014. It was felt after these conferences that inadequate generosity in the churches in India was adversely affecting its witness.

Generosity as defined by the National Generosity Network, India is as follows:-

*“Generosity is a response of love in recognizing God’s ownership of all things, and his grace to us in giving salvation and blessings, and this generosity leads to a positive view of people and situations resulting in putting others before self and a sharing of time, money and resources.”*

After the 2014 conference a committee was formed consisting of Mr. Koshy Verghese, Mr. P. Seenivasan, Mr. Peter Wiig, Ms. S. Joyce and Mr. P.K.D.Lee to develop materials to help teach Generosity in the churches in India.

This Bible study is one of the suggestions made by this committee and is made available to the churches in India for their use. Those using the material are requested to give their feedback to natgennetwork@gmail.com with suggestions for improvement.

The case studies included in the study are optional and can be used as needed by the group. In some cases two case studies have been given so that you could choose the one that is appropriate for the group.

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**Study 1 – THE NAZARENE MANIFESTO**

*Memory Verse: Luke 4:18-19 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the* ***poor****; he hath sent me to heal the* ***broken-hearted****, to preach deliverance to the* ***captives****, and recovering of sight to the* ***blind****, to set at liberty them that are* ***bruised****, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

**Introduction**

The tendency of many evangelicals has been to spiritualise the interpretation of this statement by Jesus. But recently more and more scholars have recognized that both the spiritual and the material interpretation of the statement have equal validity. In this study we will look at the meaning of some of the terms and both its spiritual and material interpretations. Then we will look at support for both from other parts of the Bible.

Poor – ptochos - from ptosso (to crouch); akin to 4422 and the alternate of 4098); a beggar (as cringing), i.e. pauper (strictly denoting absolute or public mendicancy, although also used in a qualified or relative sense;

This Greek word implies a person who has no money and not one who has less money or a shortage of money. Hence this goes well with the spiritual interpretation that we have no righteousness of any kind with us. But it primarily means those who have been crushed by circumstances to become the bottom of society. These people have the good news preached to them.

Broken-hearted – suntribo - o crush completely, i.e. to shatter (literally or figuratively): KJV -- break (in pieces), broken to shivers (+ -hearted), bruise.

This Greek word means that one’s will is broken. Unlike the English language where the heart was the seat of one’s emotions, in the Greek language it was the seat of one’s will. Thus he is crushed completely and lost the will to fight or survive. They would be the drop-outs from society, street people etc. Jesus came to bring emotional healing to these people, who are generally considered too difficult for society to handle.

Blind – tuflos – essentially means opaque or unable to see. This is usually taken to mean the spiritually blind. They are given spiritual sight or the ability to understand. Can this be meant to be taken physically?

Captive – aichmalatos – prisoner of war. Deliverance is the Greek word afesis which means forgiveness or remission or freedom. The same word is used for ‘liberty’ given to the bruised.

The primary meaning of the word is prisoner of war and in this context it means people who have become prisoners to others. This would include bonded labour and slavery of any kind. People who are affected by white slavery trafficking, child trafficking etc. Spiritually it is taken to mean people who are taken captive by sin and Satan.

Bruised – thrauo – crushed or bruised

These are people who have been crushed by oppression rather than circumstances. They are granted freedom by forgiving them their debts.

Matthew 11:1-5 In this passage Jesus tells the disciples of John the Baptist who ask Him if He is the Messiah to tell John that,

“The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”

Two of the phrases are taken straight from the Nazarene manifesto and the Greek words used are the same. There are two points to note. Jesus was referring to the miraculous healings which He was doing at that time. The poor do not have any signs and wonders done for them, but instead the good news is preached to them. How does ‘good news’ help the poor?

Matthew 25:31-46 In this judgement scene of the nations we find them judged according to the generosity they showed to people in need. They were not judged for their righteousness but for their love. Since salvation is by faith, it is taken to mean that our faith is seen by the love we carry in our hearts to people in distress.

**Case Study**:

Stephen is a well to do businessman living in Hyderabad. He has a maid servant to whom he and his family regularly share the gospel. They speak of the love of Jesus and the desire of God to deliver her from her sins.

The maid lives in a slum with her 4 children. She has been abandoned by her husband and struggles to make ends meet. She struggles to send the children to school. She suggests to Stephen to employ her son to work in the garden so that she could earn some more money and they agree to the proposal. So the eldest child drops out of school and begins to work in the garden.

Stephen and his family do not get involved in the family of the maid as they do not see it as their concern. They feel only responsible for the spiritual condition of the family and not the physical aspect of the family. Is this right? What should he do?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Aim of the Discussion is to bring out the two aspects of the gospel – the future inheritance in heaven and the present reality of God’s presence with you impacting your life both in the physical and spiritual realm.**

**Read Luke 4:14-30**

1. What is the context of the Nazarene manifesto (vs 18-19)? To whom was it addressed? Where? When (what point in Jesus’ ministry)?

*Chapter 3 of Luke ends the details of Jesus’ youth. Chapter 4 begins with the Temptation of Jesus and then launches into the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as Capernaum. He then visits Nazareth where this teaching occurs. It is addressed to the Jews and vs 26 and 27 bring out the fact that the gospel is for the Gentiles also.*

2. Jesus’ adult ministry in Luke begins in Chapter 4. The first event is the temptation from vs 1-13. Then from vs 14-30 is the visit to the synagogue at Nazareth. Is vs 18-19 meant to be an outlining of the vision for Jesus’ ministry which was to begin?

*It may have been Luke’s intention to include this passage here as it sets out magnificently the outline of Jesus’ ministry. It says that the promises of these verses have been fulfilled in Jesus that day.*

3. To what extent do the rest of chapter 4 and chapter 5 of Luke begin to fulfil these promises physically and spiritually?

*If we look at the incidents in the passages subsequent to this we find addressing both the physical and spiritual problems of the people. This seems to be a fulfilment of what Jesus said in the message at Nazareth. This would show that the passage Lk 4:18-19 is meant to be interpreted both spiritually and physically.*

4. If we are sent like Jesus (John 17:18), should our vision and mission reflect Luke 4:18-19?

*In our own ministry we also need to be conscious of the dual nature of the ministry we are called to. One, the spiritual is aimed at both the future kingdom and the present reality while the other is focused only at the present reality since in the future kingdom the body will be changed to a resurrected body.*

**Read Matt 11:`1-4**

5. What did each of the persons mentioned receive from Jesus?

*All the people with physical infirmities received physical healing but the poor received the gospel. Apparently Jesus saw the gospel as a solution to the needs of the poor. In what sense is it a solution to the needs of the poor in the physical sense (this is taken up in the next question)?*

6. What is the good news that is preached to the poverty stricken and down-trodden? How is the gospel a solution to their situation?

*Permit all to express their views on this. Then move on to the next question.*

7. Could the good news be the change that the gospel brings in the heart of the rich that makes them share their resources with the poor?

*Ultimately we would discuss this more tomorrow. But the good news changes the hearts of the rich and makes them willing to share their resources with the poor.*

8. How does Matt 11:28 and John 17:18 into the practical Christian life of the believer?

*Because of Matt 11:28 we tend to direct any person with a need to Jesus, quoting Matt 6:33 also to them. But if we take John 17:18 seriously then we are the Jesus sent to help them and what we need to day is “Come unto me all you who labour and are heavy laden, and the Christ who dwells in me will give you rest. Discuss how this would affect the life of the believer.*

9. Who are the poor that we are in contact with daily or regularly? How can we be good news to them? *Permit and free and wide discussion on this.*

**Study 2 – THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM**

*Memory Verse: Matthew 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

**Introduction**

Jesus preached the ‘gospel of the kingdom’ Matt 4:23 and spoke of the kingdom of God extensively in His ministry. From this it would appear that the gospel which Jesus preached was not a means of getting into heaven when we die, but of getting into the kingdom of God now. The kingdom was not just about our responsibilities in it but about our benefits in it.

In this study we will look at several passages that teach about the kingdom. Obviously we cannot look at all aspects of the kingdom in one study, but we will focus on the present reality of the kingdom.

Matt 4:17 says that the kingdom of God is at hand, meaning that it is available immediately. Matt 12:28 also brings out the immediacy of the kingdom.

The judgement passages and the passages on the Second coming emphasize the future aspects of the kingdom and it must be understood that many aspects of the kingdom will be experienced in the future. However, this is not to deny a present reality of the kingdom which is part of the good news Jesus preached.

In John 18:36 Jesus says that His kingdom is not of this world. This tends to be seen as a spiritual kingdom, but it is better understood as a kingdom which is totally at variance with the kingdom of the world. Hence the call to repent is to turn from the worldly kingdoms we live in to the kingdom of God. This kingdom of God as given in Isaiah 9:7 would be established with justice and righteousness.

The Roman society was a very unjust society and there were huge economic and political differences. Majority of the people were either slaves or daily labourers who had no resources and little political say. They were treated with contempt by the well-to-do and the soldiery.

To these people Jesus came and announced deliverance and an entry into a new kind of kingdom where they would get dignity, respect and freedom. This new kingdom was seen in Acts 4:32-37 where the well-to-do shared in the needs and concerns of the under-privileged.

This same truth is brought out in John 13:35 which says, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Our testimony as Christians is the love we have for one another. It is this love and this community that becomes the gospel in the present, whereas the resurrected community with its power will be in the future.

Writing in A.D. 125 the Christian philosopher Aristides paints this picture of sharing in the church:

 “They walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them, and they love one another. They despise not the widow and grieve not the orphan. He that hath, distributeth liberally to him that hath not. If they see a stranger, they bring him under their roof and rejoice over him, as it were their own brother: for they call themselves brethren, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit and in God; but when one of their poor passes away from the world, and any of them sees him, then he provides for his burial according to his ability; and if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs, and if it is possible that he may be delivered they deliver him. And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy and they have not an abundance of necessities, they fast for two or three days that they may supply the needy with their necessary food."

 Quoted in "*Poverty and Riches in the Early Church*", by Martin Hengel, pp 42-43.

**Case Study 1:**

Prakash is very active in ministry and preaches the gospel in many churches and helps many para-church organizations. When asked about his church membership he is very vague. He was baptized in a church, but he does not get along with the pastor and so does not attend church there. Because of his speaking assignments every Sunday he is in a different church. He does not feel the need for a church. How would you counsel him?

**Case Study 2:**

Two friends are talking about daily labourers and how much they struggle to survive on the meagre amounts they are paid.  They live in dirty slums, with open sewers close by and can barely support their families; half the children stay home to work, instead of going to school.  Ram suggests that they take a team to tell them about Jesus so that they have an opportunity to be a part of the *Kingdom of God.*  Hari replies by saying that, even then they will live in the same conditions.  “At least they will have a chance to go to heaven”, says Ram.  “Yes, but we must help them enjoy the *Kingdom of God* now too”, Hari retorts.  “No”, Ram disagrees, “as long as they hear the Gospel and respond, that’s enough to get them to heaven.”  But Hari insists they must help them beyond just giving the Gospel.  Ram says, “That could take years . . . !”  How would you guide these two in their discussion?  How much and for how long should they try to help these people and in what ways?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Aim of the discussion is to bring out that the church is an essential part of the gospel as preached by Jesus. The relationships within the church are an essential part of the present blessedness of the gospel to those in need – both spiritual and physical.**

**Read Matthew 4:17-19, Isaiah 9:6-7**

1. What was the good news that Jesus preached about? What does it mean?

*The gospel which Jesus preached is the gospel of the kingdom. This is in contrast to the kingdom of the Romans and Herod. It calls for the forsaking of the worldly kingdom for the kingdom of God being established by Jesus. Receiving Jesus mean to join the kingdom and to become a part of it.*

2. What is the characteristic of this kingdom?

*The kingdom is characterized as a kingdom of justice and righteousness. Ancient society was essentially an unjust society where the majority were slaves and day labourers with no status and dignity. To them Jesus preached of a kingdom where they would experience justice and dignity as they would be treated as equals and with respect in the kingdom. In a world of injustice this would be a group whose values and relationships were different.*

**Read John 17:20-23**

3. How is the Church made perfect or whole as per this passage?

*The church is made perfect by the unity demonstrated by the members with each other. We are all to become the body of Christ for which this unity is a must. Perfection here means the ability to fulfil its purpose. This leads to the next question ...*

4. How will the world know that Jesus was sent by God?

*By the unity amongst His followers and by the love they have for each other. That means that if this love is absent in any form then there is no gospel for us to preach. Our testimony to the world outside is our love inside the kingdom.*

5. What do you think this unity means and how does it manifest itself?

*Here the participants could be given freedom to share ideas, but stay focused on how this can be a reality in our churches and what our role is in this.*

**Read Acts 2:40-47, 4:32-37**

6. How did this unity manifest itself in the church at Jerusalem? Identify three phrases used in the verses. What do they mean?

*This may or may not reinforce what was shared in the previous question. If it reinforces, then it is a biblical illustration of what was discussed. If it does not reinforce these are new ideas added to the previous discussion by the Bible.*

7. What was the effect of this unity?

*Acts 2:40-47, they met daily,* ***the shared resources****, signs and wonders took place among them, there was a joy amongst them.*

*Acts 4:32-37* ***They shared their wealth with each other****, there was power in their witness, there was* ***no one who lacked anything among them***

8. To what extent is this kind of unity present in your church?

*Let them discuss frankly but do not let the discussion become negative, but rather towards finding solutions.*

**Read John 13:34-35**

9. What is the new commandment given here? Whom are we love?

*The new command is to love one another. This is the command from Jesus for us.*

10. How do we give witness to our faith according to these two verses?

*Our witness is the love we have for each other. This reinforces what was discussed in the last question.*

**Summary**

11. Is it possible for you to be a part of this kingdom? What would be the most difficult for you to practice?

*Here let them discuss freely with genuine introspection.*

**Study 3 – STEWARDSHIP FOR GENEROSITY**

*Memory Verse: I Cor 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.*

**Introduction**

We are called to be stewards

As per the Bible the world belongs to God and everything has been created by Him Ps 24:1. But this world which belongs to God has been entrusted to our care Gen 2:15 with authority to fulfil our stewardship role Gen 1:26.

One of the great misconceptions that exist is that once we have paid the tithes which belong to God the remaining 90% is mine. This is not what the Bible says. Rather the Bible gives instructions from God as to how we are to use the resources entrusted to our care according to our abilities Matt 25:14.

The word ‘stewardship’ is defined in the Encyclopaedia Britannica as

The conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care - Enc. Britannica

An essential part of the definition is the fact that the steward is looking after something that belongs to someone else. It is not his. The ownership is elsewhere. But he is in charge, looking after the estate on behalf of the owner. This has come to symbolise the Christian understanding of their role in the world, as looking after something that belongs to God.

This makes a dramatic change in behaviour. If I am living in my “own” house, whenever I want to make any alterations I just go ahead and make it. I use or misuse the building at will, since it is mine. But when I am living in a leased house, I cannot do what I please, but have to get permission from the owner for any changes to be made. I cannot misuse the house and am liable for any damage that I may cause to the property.

**Biblical Roots**

In the New Testament, the word stewardship is used to translate the Greek word ‘*oikonomia*’ coming from the two words ‘*oikos*’ and ‘*nomia*’. *Oikos* refers to the house and *nomia* the law or custom of the house. Essentially it meant the laws or norms for running the household.

From this the word ‘*oikonomos*’ developed, as the steward who ran the house on behalf of his master. In those days the well-to-do did not have to work, but spent his time in matters of state, or in learning or in other pastimes. His domestic responsibilities were delegated to trusted slaves who ran the household on behalf of him. An example in the Bible would be Joseph running the household of Potiphar on his behalf in Egypt.

This is the use of the word in Luke 12:42, “And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season?” It is the steward who distributes the resources to all on behalf of the master. He is called the ruler of the household in the parable, to show the extant of authority he has.

This is then the same picture that applies to us, in our life in this world. We are acting as stewards, dispensing material and emotional and spiritual goods for the benefit of the world on behalf of God, who has delegated the same to us.

**Oikonomia as apportionment**

The term ‘*oikonomia*’ carries the meaning of arrangement or apportioning. Hence it is a term used in art for the distribution of colour in a work of art. The emphasis is on the investment of resources rather than the usage of resources. It sees that the resources are allotted rightly and invested wisely in the management of the household.

We also need to understand that the money that an organisation is using for the kingdom is not expenditure, but an investment, and an allotment of the resources provided to it for investment. The money it retains for its own use is also an investment, as we use this to maintain the organisation and develop the organisation for ministry.

So stewardship is not how to spend or donate the monies given to me, but how to invest monies entrusted to me. This is the idea conveyed in the Greek word ‘*oikonomia*’.

**Case Study 1:**

Prakash is a very sincere believer and is very careful to see that he fulfils all God’s expectation from him. He is meticulous in his payment of tithes to the church.

He lives very comfortably and is earning well in his career. He feels that once he has paid his tithes, his financial obligation to Good has ceased, and anything he may give for needs of ministry or people is his generosity and not a requirement from him by God.

Is he right in his perspective?

**Case Study 2**

Do you like my new Mahindra SUV?” asks George.  “Nice”, says Krishna.  “Yup, earned it with my own hard earned money!”  exclaims George.  A phone call interrupts their conversation:  Shreya (church youth leader): “Hi Mr. Krishna, we are in need of a vehicle this weekend, to go on an outreach with our youth.  Is there any possibility of using your Sumo?”  Krishna: “Of course, no problem, I would love the opportunity of investing in you and your outreach.  I will take a bus to work on Saturday.”  Shreya: “Thanks so much, by the way, we have 17 of us going and need one more vehicle, do you know of any other available?”  Krishna: “Just one minute . . . George, can you lend your vehicle to the youth group this weekend, for their outreach?”  George: “No way, it’s new and it might get scratched.”  Krishna: “Well, could you drive them, since you are off work?  I’m sure they love your leadership and guitar skills for the outreach.”  George: “Uh, well I was planning to go to a movie, so it won’t work out.”  Krishna: “Sorry Shreya, I don’t know of anyone now, but I’ll make a few calls and get back to you.”  Shreya: “Thanks so much, bye.”  George: “Why do you go to so much risk, Krishna . . . lending your vehicle, taking the bus to work, taking your time to make phone calls?  They can can do all that stuff.”  How would you have answered George’s questions?  Is George right in not lending the vehicle?  What is Krishna’s attitude toward his possessions and his time?  How should we view all that God has given us . . . our belongings, time, talents etc.

**Jay Link’s video on God’s ownership could be played here.**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Read Genesis 1:26-31.**

1. What does verse 26 to 28 mean in the use of the term ‘dominion’? Does it give man the freedom to do what he wants or does it mean to look after on behalf of God?

*Christians have been accused of destroying creation because they think that they own it because of this verse. Instead this needs to be seen as authority given to fulfil our responsibility to look after creation as delegated to Adam in Gen 2:15. The participants need to have a correct understanding of this domination.*

2. How does Gen 2:15 apply to us now?

*The discussion needs to broaden looking after the Garden to looking after a fallen world.*

**Read Genesis 3:6-19**

3. What happened to the relationship between Adam and God in verse 8?

*The relationship between Adam and God is broken as seen in Adam and Eve hiding from the presence of God. Their relationship with God changes from Creator – Created to Judge - Sinner*

4 What happened to the relationship between Adam and Eve in verse 13?

*Adam blames Eve and no longer sees her as a Helper but as a cause of problems. He does not stand with Eve but puts himself against Eve. In this, man becomes alienated from other men and women because of their competition for scarce resources – James 4:1-2.*

5. What happened to the relationship between Adam and creation in vs 18-19?

*Creation no longer submits to Adam and slowly gains dominance over Adam. Because of this Adam begins to worship creation instead of the creator Rom 1:25. This inversion of the relationship affects all of Adam and his relationships.*

6. What happened to Adam’s relationship with self according to Rom 7:15?

*Adam can no longer accept himself but has low self esteem. Even when we accept the forgiveness which Jesus gives us, we do not forgive ourselves. This inability to forgive ourselves leads to low self-esteem. We see ourselves as sinners and not the child of God made in God’s image.*

7. Can we say our stewardship responsibility is the restoration of all these four relationships?

*Salvation restores all four relationships and not just our relationship with God. The antithesis of God is the material world which has begun dominating us. Unless we set right our relationship with the material we cannot set right our relationship with God, Matt 6:24. In face we cannot set right our relationship with rest of mankind as we end up competing with them for resources, James 4:1-2. Hence we need to seek and expect a setting right of all four relationships, especially the one with the world and the one with God. This sets right the o0ther two.*

**Read Matt 25:14-30.**

8. What did God expect from these stewards? What do we learn about investment from this parable?

*Bring out the importance of multiplication rather than spending. We are leading the participants to think in terms of investing rather than giving.*

9. How can I invest and multiply the resources of God?

*Permit a free discussion here.*

**Read Psalm 50:7-15**

10. Is God dependent on our giving? Are we ‘helping God’ by giving to Him?

*We give as a stewardship function, following the guidelines God gives us in the Bible. We do not give to ‘help’ God. Help the participants realize that there is no ‘merit’ in their giving but the fulfilment of a stewardship responsibility.*

11. Why does the passage encourage us to offer sacrifices to God?

*We offer the sacrifices because we need cleansing, not because God needs the sacrifices. Do it as a means of communicating your feelings and needs to God rather than as meeting God’s need.*

**Read Rom 13:1-2 and Col 1:16**

12. Is our profession a stewardship from God?

*We build this part of the discussion from 2 Cor 5:15. We are not living for ourselves but for Jesus. So where does ‘work’ fit into living for Jesus?*

*Most see work as a means of obtaining food so that we can live. Use Phil 1:21ff to bring out that living is not an end in itself, doing ministry is. Make them realize that we earn money to help or finance our ministry. The other aspect of work is that it gives us a platform for witnessing. This is where we interact with the world and can witness to the world.*

*Both the above reasons do not give any meaning in work per se and hence falls short. So we need to dig a bit deeper.*

*Col 1:16 says that all power structures in the world were created by Jesus and for Jesus. So all businesses are created by Jesus and for Jesus. This is because all business enable men to survive, and fulfils the ‘Sustaining’ role of God in creation. We need to understand that we have been called by God into our profession and we move only when God calls us to.*

*Rom 13:1-2 reinforces this when it says that all governing authorities do so on behalf of God and we are to submit to them.*

13. Is the creation of jobs and wealth by running businesses a stewardship responsibility from God?

*Let the participants discuss this in depth.*

**Study 4 A BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TO MONEY**

*Memory Verse: Matt 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

**Introduction**

When Jesus began to preach, He preached on the need to repent Matt 6:17. This has generally been seen as repenting from ones sins. However the New Testament does not tell us what we are to repent from, but only Repent.

The word repent is the translation of the Greek word metanoia which means meta = change and nous = mind. To repent from ones sins before one gets salvation becomes a ‘work’ and since salvation is seen as free of any work, some interpret it as a change of ones mind about sin or the way we look at sin.

However there is a third possibility and that is that the repentance Jesus calls for is from the world and not sin alone - the former when turning to God and the latter as a part of the sanctification process.

What is our attitude to money and the world meant to be? Contradictory statements in the Bible make it difficult to know what exactly we are meant to do. Matt 6:31-34 can be taken to mean that we should not worry about tomorrow, hence do not plan for tomorrow. Yet the second half of the last sentence is not said though it may be implied. On the other hand passages like Prov 6:6-11 imply that we need to concern ourself with the future. The same for Thess 3:10. These verses can only be sustained by rejecting the implication that we should not plan for tomorrow, and restricting the meaning to do not worry about tomorrow.

The above distinction is crucial. We do not worry since we trust God and the focus of our life is the kingdom of God rather than money. However, that does not mean we do not make practical arrangements to cater for the future. But we recognize that any arrangements we make are dependent on God’s grace for them to bear fruit.

Statements like Matt 6:24, 19:16-22 would indicate that having a right attitude to money is crucial to the Christian life.

Recognizing these contradictory and difficult issues let us study the Biblical teaching on money.

**Case Study 1:**

Vimala had accepted Christ as her Saviour in the Youth Fellowship and had always been zealous in worshipping and spending time in the study of the word. When the time came for her to choose her career she chose medicine as she believed that she could serve God and mankind best through that profession. She applied for admission to the CMC Vellore and Ludhiana and the state run medical colleges, but failed to get selected for any off them. She is now inconsolable and spends the days weeping and in depression. As her pastor how would you counsel her? Where has she gone wrong?

**Case Study 2**

“I got a promotion and a big raise in salary yesterday,” Krishna happily declared to his friends at the midweek Bible study.  “That’s great,” they all declared.  “Yes, I’ve been working hard for this over the last year”, he replied.  After lunch (that Krishna sponsored) they were all saying “good-bye” and Sunitha reminded them all of the outreach planned for the poor in the neighbourhood on Saturday evening.  “The demands are more at work now, so I don’t think I’ll be able to come,” said Krishna.  “Sorry, we’ll miss you,” the other’s said.  Three weeks later, at church, his friends exclaim . . . “Krishna, we haven’t seen you for almost a month, where have you been?”  “Well, with the new job role, it has been very busy, with some travel involved . . . and guess what, with some overtime at work, I have been able save up to get a new house and a new car,”  Kirshna proudly announced.  “But didn’t you just get a new car last year?” asked Nikhil.  “Yes,” said Krishna, “but that’s outdated, wanted to upgrade, bye, I’ve gotta run, need to decorate the house.”  What was Krishna’s mind on at work over the last year?  What is the difference between *striving* for promotions and being *noticed* for your hard work?  What things seem to have changed for Krishna after the promotion?  Does he seem content with what he has, how can you tell?  Does his “love” for God seem as strong now as before?  Do you feel there are any *red flags* in Krishna’s life?  How could we, if in a similar situation to Krishna, stay balanced and what things should we be aware of?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Read Matt 6:24, I John 2:15-17, James 4:4**

1. What does it mean to serve money instead of God?

*We need to bring out that serving money means to trust money rather than God for what we need. Illustrations of this can be sought from the participants. When we are devastated by worldly things like college admissions, lack of promotion at the job, negotiation of dowries, etc. it shows that we are still trusting money to solve our problems.*

1. What does John mean by loving the world and James by friendship with the world?

*Loving the world is where your heart and ambition is. When my priority is the world and its possessions, I am loving the world. James uses a weaker word – friendship, but it expresses the same idea. One cannot have material or worldly goals but they need to be about the kingdom of God.*

1. What does God say about the world when He created it in Gen 1:31? Is the world itself evil or love for the world evil?

*God said that the world was good, and therefore there is nothing evil in the material. It is only the love of the material that is evil or trust in the material that is evil.*

**Read 1 Tim 6:6-19, Matt 6:31-34, James 1:13-14**

1. Why should we not strive or have a goal of being rich? Are we content?

*Why does Paul say that desiring to be rich would create spiritual problems for us? Why? Let the participants explore this idea and convince themselves. We need to bring out that we are content with the material possessions we have but not the spiritual situation of the world. Hence we are motivated to change the world and not to run after the material.*

1. What should the goals in our life be?

*Let the group decide what the right perspectives we need to have on this issue are. Matt 6:33 may give some insight.*

1. What is the source of temptation in our lives as per these verses? How can we get rid of it (1 Tim 6:10)?

*James 1:13-14 will go equally with I Tim 6:10 in saying that it is the trust in the material that leads to temptation, sin and death. So the solution is repentance from the material, and this has to be before we can repent from our sins. Once the root of evil – trust in the material – removed from our life by repentance from the material, we can repent from sin.*

*This can be seen sequentially as follows. We first set right our relationship with God by choosing him over the world – repentance from the world. Then we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit by our repentance from sin.*

*Point out that in the New Testament it does not say repent from your sins but just repent.*

*I also use the two incidents in the ministry of Jesus- the woman caught in adultery John 8:1-8 and the rich young ruler Matt 19. It is the person who trusts in money who is rejected, not the ‘sinner’. Why?*

*The concept of repentance from the trust in the material is not well known or well accepted among believers and so you would have to help them understand the concept. It is not rejecting the world but trust in the world. Also the fact that the New Testament says just ‘repent’ and not ‘repent from your sins’ would be new to most people.*

 7. What are the rich to be careful of according to I Tim 6:17?

 *Not to be proud of their wealth and not to trust in their wealth.*

 8 What is the responsibility put on the rich according to 1 Tim 6:18 and passages like Lev 23:22 and Dt 15:7-11? (We will spend more time on this topic in lesson 6. The thought is just introduced here.)

 *The rich are to see that the poor have enough to survive and do not starve.*

**Study 5 FORGIVING OTHERS**

*Memory Verse: Matthew 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

**Introduction**

Though Jesus insisted on forgiveness as the hallmark of the Christian life, Christians have traditionally found it hard to live up to this standard. Along with forgiveness we have the other Christian virtue of being non-judgemental. These two traits go hand in hand and are complementary.

There are many reasons that we are asked not to judge. The primary is that of humility. When we judge others we imply that we are better than them. Considering our own sinfulness this is not acceptable.

The other is because we are generous and are willing to overlook at the faults of others. We do not have a critical outlook at people, but rather try to work with them by accepting them as they are. After all God has accepted us as we are.

The other side of the coin of not being judgemental is being forgiving. When people do things which annoy us or hurt us we are willing to forgive them for the same reasons. We realize that we have done the same to others and have been forgiven.

**Case Study 1**:

Prakash’s name was proposed for a post in his church. Because there were other names also proposed an election had to be held. Santhosh felt that Suresh, one of the other candidates was the best candidate, and he canvassed for him among the members, comparing the capabilities and spiritualities of the different candidates. In doing so he made some negative evaluations of Prakash.

Now Prakash will not speak to either Santhosh or Suresh. Though he is involved with the church and ministry people find him difficult to get along with and he finds that he is slowly losing his friends and his spirituality. How would you counsel him?

**Case Study 2**

Ranjit walks in the door from work, and his wife, Anusha, is yelling at Sheetal, their maidservant.  “You took Rs. 10 from the shelf, after all I have done for you over the last 5 years . . . come tomorrow to collect your last salary, I’m sending you out.”  Sheetal begs, “Please, Amma, we are struggling at home, with our two children, and I needed to buy a little rice, I don’t have any other job, my husband also gets paid very little whenever he gets daily labour jobs.”  “What do you mean?  I pay you Rs. 1500 a month, I have all these five years . . . now get out and come back tomorrow” retorted Anusha.  After Sheetal leaves, Ranjit asks Anusha,  “Why are you home early today?”  Anusha replies, with a laugh, “Oh, yeah, I said I was sick and my boss just told me to take the rest of the day off . . . and I went to visit a friend.”  “But as Christians, we can’t do that, isn’t that being dishonest AND stealing from the company?  “What, do you mean, stealing?”  Sheetal asks in surprise.  “They are paying you for being at work, but you were with a friend,” says Ranjit, “And your boss has been so generous to you over all these years, giving you free leaves many times when you’ve asked.  Anusha, pauses to think.  Then Ranjit adds, “About Sheetal, let’s have mercy on her, we’ll warn her, but we don’t pay her enough, we haven’t given her a raise in pay all these years, and she has been so faithful.”  What do you think Anusha is guilty of, (think of how her company has treated her, and how she treated Sheetal)?  Do you think her company gave her pay raises?  What do you think the consequences should be for Sheetal?  How could Ranjit & Anusha be a Christlike blessing to Sheetal?

**DISCUSSION QUESGTIONS**

**Read Matthew 6:19-24, 7:1-6**

1. What does the phrase ‘eye is evil’ mean in Matt 20:15? See also Deut 15:9. What happens if our ‘eye is evil’ according to the passage we read?

*The phrase ‘eye is evil’ appears to mean that our eye is critical of others and lacks love.*

*If we are critical and if we lack generosity in the way we look on others, our life is full of darkness. We need to look on others with generosity.*

2. What is the reason given for not being judgemental over others according to 7:1-6?

*We are not critical of others because we recognize our own struggles and sinfulness.*

3. When is judging right? How do we balance passages like Heb 12:4-11, 1 Cor 5:1-5 with this passage? When is judging and chastening an expression of our love and legitimate?

*There appears to be a right place to be judgemental in the Bible and it is important to recognize that we do not just accept people who do not repent or want to change. One good verse is Heb 12:6 where punishment is seen as an expression of God’s love. We judge to help someone not condemn them. A discussion on when we should judge and when we should not would be relevant here.*

*The important point is that we need to accept people, not reject them, but work on developing them as an expression of our love.*

**Read Romans chapter 14.**

4. What is Paul’s argument for not judging others in the church?

*Here Paul asks us to be willing to accept others in spite of their differences with us and not to argue over non-essentials. What are the non-essentials that divide your church today? What are the non-essentials that divide the Church today?*

5. What are some unnecessary issues that bring out the judge in you? How can we get over this?

*This is a time for introspection for the members to see where they struggle in this area. What are some of their pet doctrines where co0ntradiction upset them? How can they get over this?*

**Read Matthew 18:21-35**

6. What happens to the servant who does not forgive the debt owed to him? Why? Is it just to condemn him?

*The servant who does not forgive is condemned. It would appear that Jesus considered forgiveness towards an automatic reflex action of a true believer who has experienced forgiveness of his sins and actions. So a person who does not forgive others either has not experienced the forgiveness of God or is not a believer.*

7. Why is it that Christians do not take this passage or Matt 6:15 seriously even through it speaks about not having salvation if we do not forgive others?

*It would appear that the gospel of grace has taken away any response from the believer, leading to carelessness in his response. When the response is the natural love in our hearts it is not a work, but when it is something we do not want to donut we do, I is a work. So we need to see the unwillingness to forgive as a symptom of lack of faith in Jesus.*

8. Can we list people we need to re-evaluate our attitude towards them based on the learning from this lesson.

*This is a time of personal examination.*

**Study 6 SOCIAL JUSTICE**

*Memory Verse: I Cor 10:24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.*

**Introduction**

There is a general misconception that in the Old Testament salvation was earned by works of the Law. In fact it is not so. God rescues the Israelites out of Egypt without them having done anything to merit it and makes them My People. At this stage there is no Law given, and they are made the people of God purely by grace, under the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 17.

Then God tells them, now that you are my people these are the norms or Laws I need you to live by. If you do not live by these norms or Laws, I will cast you away from Me. Hence, obedience to the Law was necessary for the retention of their relationship with God and not for salvation as such.

In the New Coven-ant, God pours out His Holy Spirit upon us so that we can live the life required, and if we occasionally fail the blood of Jesus Christ protects us so that we are never cast away. However the demand that we live by the norms and values of Yahweh is still very much there as Paul emphasizes in passages like Ephesians chapter 5.

The stress in these Laws is twofold. One is maintaining God’s holiness and the other is maintaining social justice for the poor and powerless. While the emphasis on the latter is not much in the New Testament because the Christians were not in a position of power but were the oppressed, it is still there in books like the Epistle of James and some of the epistles of Paul and is seen practiced in the church in Acts 4. However, there is one principle put forward by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount that the expectation in the New Testament is higher than what it was in the Old Testament.

While these laws on social justice existed for practice within the people of God, in the New Testament this flows in our lives because of the kind of person the Holy Spirit makes us.

**Case Study**

“That talk by the World Vision person at church today was good wasn’t it, Priyanka?”  asked her mother, “I am sure that with your new position as an MDO you could really help so many needy people out” she added.  “I’m doing my duty, I give 10 % to the church and poor and go out once a month to volunteer,” replied Priyanka,  “besides, those people are dirty and don’t have manners, or know how to act socially, except that one lady that I gave a loan to, she paid the loan back and was thankful, but so many others are a nuisance and irresponsible and stupid.”  Her mother carried on, “Yes, but many of them do not know how to lift themselves up, they don’t have anyone to help them, because they are uneducated, God loves them . . .”  “I got to this position by my hard work, talents and brains, they’re lazy and need to learn how to take care of themselves,” Priyanka interrupted.  In your opinion, how and why is Priyanka in the position she is in?  Do you feel that her attitude towards the poor is what it should be, as a Christian?  Do you think that her 10 % giving and once a month service is what God would want, why/why not?  How do you think Priyanka should view her position and is there any way in which she could improve her attitude, if so, how?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Read Matthew 5:21-48**

1. The phrase “You have heard that it was said” refers to the Law. Why does Jesus enhance the demands of the Law?

*Jesus is looking at the intent of the Law rather than the literal meaning in the words. Also Jesus is changing the basis of our understanding from legalism to love as the basis of our actions. I further feel that because we have the Spirit poured out on us, the requirements of God increases far beyond what the Old Testament required.*

1. The change that Jesus makes emphasizes what aspect of the Law?

*The examples Jesus gave are in the relationship between men. Since the basis for our action is changed from the Law to love, the main area of change is in the relationship between people.*

**Read Lev 25:8-28**

1. To understand the laws regarding the sale of land we need to understand that land was the means of production in an agricultural society. What do these laws try to achieve in Jewish society?

*The laws were made to safeguard the means of production. The idea is that no family should be impoverished because of some disaster or mismanagement. After a time, the land will return to the original owners so that they can come out off their poverty trap.*

1. How would these laws apply to society today? (What are the different means of production today?)

*How would these laws be required to be modified for today’s world? The means of production is capital and knowledge. What laws would God have made for the people of God in this context? Right to Education is an example of what God does.*

**Read Deut 15:1-18**

1. What should be our attitude towards those who cannot pay the money they owe us due to poverty rather than due to dishonesty? Why do we find this difficult?

*One of the ways of helping people to get out of crippling debt is to write of the debts. While we recognize the danger of breeding irresponsibility we need to find ways to help them. One could be to educate on basic financial management; another would be to improve his earning potential etc.*

1. As per verses 12-14 how liberal are we meant to be to the needy? How much should we give him? Are we to provide just for his immediate need or for his the ‘means of production’?

*Here we see that not only is the person who sold himself into slavery because of his debt released, but he is sent away with enough to start a new life. Do we provide enough for people to start over again or do we just forgive them their debts? Is my intention obedience to the Law or love for the person?*

1. How can we reinterpret these for today just like Jesus did in the Sermon on the Mount?

*Let the participants think outside the box. One perspective could be, do not wait for the year off the jubilee but mentally write off debts immediately.*

**Lev 19:9-10, Deut 24:19-22**

1. What is the intention behind these laws?

*That the poor have an opportunity to obtain food*

1. What is the responsibility put upon the rich?

 *It puts a responsibility on the rich to make food available for the poor.*

1. How can this be practised today?

*Let the members share their ideas. Challenge them to be imaginative.*

**Deut 5:12-15**

1. Why should we observe the Sabbath?

*So that the people under our control can have rest.*

1. Do we give our people a Sabbath rest?

*Let the members share honestly if they give adequate rest to their people.*

**John 13:34-35**

13. We are to love one another as per Jesus’ command. How can all what we have studied about Israel be practiced in the church today?

*The church is the new Israel and it fulfils all that Israel was meant to be. Let the participants explore this issue with sincerity*.

14 Is the way we handle disputes and the fact of disputes a measure of the spirituality of the church? See Paul in I Cor 6:1-7.

*Disputes destroy the witness of the church. Paul would say that both the one who is cheated and the one who is offended when he is cheated are both driven by money and so are unspiritual.*

**Study 7 BEING A GENEROUS CHURCH**

*Memory Verse: Phil 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.*

We have a few examples of generous churches in the New Testament and one of a church which seemed to lack Generosity. The generous churches like Jerusalem, Antioch and Philippi were generous and prospered and became strong in the Lord. The church in Corinth however was not generous and struggled with many issues. It would appear that there is a link between the generosity of a church and its spiritual health. While all the churches had some issues, none of them was as serious as the issues at Corinth.

The generosity of the church is both internal and external. Generosity within the church is reflected in the relationships between the members of the church. External generosity is seen in its generosity to other churches and missions.

**Case Study**

“As we close the church service today, I have a few announcements to make.  There are two needs in particular.  One, Mr. Choudhary needs a little financial help, as he is retired and lives on a fixed income and Pastor Dayakar (of our daughter church out in the village) needs a little help with his studies.  He’s getting ready to write his Intermediate exams and is struggling in the area of maths.  He’s working very sincerely and wants to improve himself so that he can be more effective in his community” said Pastor Pramod as he addressed the congregation.  Dr. Priscilla, a semi-retired maths professor, thought to herself, “Hmmm, Mr. Choudhary did give me a loan once, maybe I’ll give him Rs. 100 . . . better than nothing, and others will see that I care, but that good-for-nothing Pastor is uneducated and doesn’t deserve my time and help.”  As Dr. Priscilla was giving the money to the Pastor, a handful of the youth were eagerly chatting away and came to the Pastor and asked, “How, where and when can we help Pastor Dayakar?  We were just talking, and we would like to send some of our degree students out to help him prepare for his exams . . . we’d also like to do an outreach there in his village, if he’d like, and is there anything else he needs?  We can try to raise some money from our friends, it may not be much, but we’d love to help however we can.”  How did the attitudes of Dr. Priscilla and the college students differ and in what ways?  Who had more to give and in what ways?  Who gave more and in what ways?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Read Acts 4:32-37**

1. How was the unity of the church seen in verse 32? (This was an attitude of the wealthy and not a cooperative society set up)

*It is a mistake to see this as an early experiment in communism. The tense is present continuous and better seen as that whenever a need arose among the members of the church, the rich shared from their wealth to meet it. The unity of the church is seen in the members getting involved in the needs of their fellow members. Unity needs to be seen in the real commitment to each other rather than just words.*

2. What was the outcome of this willingness to share to the members of the church?

*There were none among them who had any need*

3. How was this generosity between members seen in Acts 6?

*They looked after the orphans and widows and when there was discontent the administration was handed over to the people who were unhappy so that there would be no reason for complaint. There was a willingness to cede control over the money they had contributed. (The names of the seven deacons show that they were from the Hellenic Jews. Most of the contributions would have been from Judeans).*

4. When there was an issue the church in Antioch sent to which church for guidance? Acts 15:2

*The church in Jerusalem had a good reputation and when a dispute arose they were asked to arbitrate. This shows the high esteem that the Jerusalem church had.*

**Read Acts 13:2**

5. Were the missionaries chosen from the cream of the church or from up and coming youngsters? How willing are we to part with those who are a blessing to the church?

*The generosity of the church in Antioch is seen in their willingness to give their best elders for the cause of missions. Just imagine your own church with two of the best elders missing.*

6. In Acts 11:27-30 how did they respond to the crisis in Jerusalem?

*The generosity of the church is seen in their immediate response to the crisis in Jerusalem.*

7 What was the impact of this church in church history? (It became the Syrian Orthodox Church sending missionaries and bishops even to India!)

*The church at Antioch was always a strong church and gave leadership to the Christian world for many years and still does so*

**Read 2 Cor 8:1-4**

8 What was the situation in Philippi when they gave for the need of Jerusalem?

*They were under great persecution and in poverty.*

9. What does Paul commend the church for in Phil 1:1-8?

 *For their partnering with him in the gospel.*

10. In 2 Cor 9:1-5 how long has the collection for Jerusalem been going on in Corinth? What is the state of the collection?

*From the wordings it would appear that the collection for Jerusalem had been going on for a year with little success. Paul had used the example of the collection being done in Corinth to motivate the other churches and was now embarrassed by the failure at Corinth. This shows the lack of generosity in the church at Corinth.*

11. From a quick scan of 1 Corinthians what was the condition of the church in Corinth? Can you list the problems they had?

 *They seemed to have problems of factions and disputes, court cases, immorality, and pride leading to showing off of gifts etc.*

12. Would it be fair to say that the spirituality of the church is measured by its generosity?

 *The generous churches seemed to do well spiritually and the church which was not generous seemed to have spiritual problems.*

13. Suggest ways by which we make the church we are in generous?

 *Let the members share freely what they think.*

14 Do our budgets reflect generosity?

 *Here also let the members share freely*

**Study 8**

**Summary and commitment**

This is a time of commitment, where we examine ourselves in the light of 6 of the studies which apply to individuals. Take the time to look at the example of Moses and Paul and make a commitment on areas where there needs to be a change in your life. Close the session with the signing of the pledge.

1. Nazarene manifesto

Genesis 14:13-16 Abraham’s deliverance of Lot.

Philemon 15-16 Paul’s deliverance of Onesimus

Is there anyone in the people you know whom you could deliver?

1. The gospel of the kingdom

Genesis 13:1-13 Abraham’s generosity to Lot

Acts 4:32-37 – Generosity in the church in Jerusalem

Is there someone in the church you need to be generous to?

What is my relationship with my church?

1. Stewardship

Genesis 12:1-3 Abraham’s purpose in life

Acts 26:19-23 Paul’s purpose in life

Are you clear about God’s purpose for you? Are you willing to accept God’s purpose for you?

1. Your attitude to Money

Gen 14:21-24 Abraham’s attitude to money

Phil 4:10-14 Paul’s attitude to money

What is our attitude to money? Can we make commitments here?

1. Forgiveness

Gen 14:13-16 Abraham did not carry grudges

2 Tim 4:11, 2 Cor 2:10-11 Paul did not carry grudges.

Is there anyone you need to forgive in your life? Is there anyone you avoid meeting?

1. Social Justice

Luke 19:1-10 How did Zacchaeus give social justice on encountering Jesus?

How do the people who interact with you see you in terms of social justice? – Your spouse and children? Your relatives? Your staff? Your workers in your house?

## DECLARATION OF OUR COMMITMENT

We, the church members gathered in this Bible Study on Generosity, solemnly declare the following.

We are thankful to God that by His grace, mercy and love, He planted us in India, where the Gospel of Jesus Christ came very early in the History of the Church, worldwide. We remember with gratitude, the commitment and sacrifice of thousands of women and men of God, who served us and set us free from bondage and oppression.

We the Church in India are richly blessed, for which we thank our Lord.

While we do recognise that we are engaged in missions today, we confess that we have fallen far short of reflecting the generosity God has shown us, for which we repent and seek His forgiveness.

We as individuals, families, church congregations and missions with renewed resolution this day empty ourselves at the cross of our Lord, so as to allow the love of Jesus Christ to work through us, setting people free. We submit to the leadership, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to direct our thoughts, attitudes, actions, words and behaviours to reach out to those around us, for people to experience the fullness of life. We will remember that God is the owner of all we possess. We commit to share the gospel of Jesus Christ by sacrificially giving, serving and discipling people in our neighbourhoods.

**We pledge that under the enabling of the Holy Spirit, we will:**

* Be examples of sacrificial giving in every aspect of life
* Generously disciple individuals, families, church congregations and missions to be Salt of the earth and Light of the world
* Usher in the Kingdom of God through our generous life in our communities
* Raise a movement of Generosity, bringing revival in the church in India