

NOTES FOR SMALL COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL USE

INTRODUCTION

This talk is part one of three – please listen to them all: <https://www.ccweb.org.uk/Media/AllMedia.aspx>

I am intentionally producing more material than usual, in the hope that different sections will appeal to different people. It is not meant to be overwhelming!

A reminder of key dates:

March 1, 8 & 15	Sunday Teaching – at the 8, the 10 & the 5
March 11, 18 & 25	Wednesday Teaching – at the 11
Monday 2 March	Church Family Prayer Meeting – 7.45 pm
Saturday March 28	Open Meeting to look at plans and ask Questions (10.00 am to 12.00 noon)
Monday March 30	Open Meeting to look at plans and ask Questions (7.30 – 9.30 pm)
Monday 6 April	Church Family Prayer Meeting – 7.45 pm

**** Sunday 26 April – our Annual Church Meeting at 10.00 am ****

We are asking all church family members to make every effort to join us for this very special Gathering, at which our pledges and gifts will be made as part of our act of worship

READING

¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1-2

MAIN POINTS OF THE TALK

1. GIVING IS A HEART ISSUE

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21

There are more bible verses on money, wealth and possessions (2,450) than anything apart from love, with four times more than on faith or prayer. Jesus warns explicitly about the danger of focusing on wealth

16 of the 38 recorded parables are about money and possessions. One of our challenges is that, whilst we as a church often avoid talking about money, Jesus never stopped.

2. GOD GAVE FIRST

¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1-2

We love God because he first loved us 1 John 4:19

We cannot live generous lives because we feel we ought to or because someone tells us to.
We can only live generously when we cannot help it.
Because our lives have been transformed by the One who first loved us.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Being very rich doesn't change a person, but it does unmask them ...

Money is a wonderful servant but a terrible master – we had better master money before it masters us ...

Money must be watched, not because it can be stolen, but because it can steal. It can steal control of a person's life.

As we move closer to God, it becomes easier to see that the things in which we invest our time, money, and energy are the things that matter to us most.

We give because we have a need to give – it is profoundly good for us to imitate God in this.

'If you own something you cannot give away, then you don't own it, it owns you.' (Albert Schweitzer, 20th-C Lutheran theologian & winner of the Nobel Peace Prize)

The move from asking ourselves how much of *our* money should we *give away* to how much of *God's* money should we *keep* is **the** greatest discipleship challenge of generous giving.

If money is un-surrendered, it masters us. When we hold it as a trust, it blesses us.

Jim Eliot was a young Plymouth Brethren Christian when he heard God's call to go and be a missionary. He attended 4 years in Wheaton College from 1945 to 1949 studying linguistics in order to reach people for Christ who did not have a written language. He later dedicated all to reach the Auca tribe of Ecuador. On January 5, 1955 he and 4 other missionary men were dropped by helicopter on a river beach near an Auca settlement. 3 days later, their bodies were found nearby.

Jim's young widow found the following words written in her husband's diary for the day they'd flown in: 'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he can never lose.'

SCRIPTURE

Choose one or more of the following passages of scripture.

1. Observation: what does this passage say?

Underline repeated words and phrases

Circle the promises

Draw a box around any commands

Mark every reference to God

Is there cause and effect (e.g. therefore, because, so that etc.)?

2. Reflection: what is the Holy Spirit telling me?

What is there to encourage and strengthen me?

What is there to challenge me?

3. Application

Is there anything which calls me to repentance?

Is there anything which calls me to change?

though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them. Psalm 62:10

give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Proverbs 30:8

¹⁹ 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. Matthew 13:22

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. Matthew 16:25

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Luke 6:38

²⁹ And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. ³⁰ For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Luke 12:29-31

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son John 3:16

But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. 1 Timothy 6:10, 17-19

'We love God because he first loved us.' 1 John 4:19

QUESTIONS

Why does the bible devote so many verses to wealth?

What effect does 'my' wealth (money, possessions etc.) have on my soul?

Is money my servant or my master?

Who owns my possessions – does God or do I?

Do I see myself the owner and controller of what I have or as the trustee of what God's given me?

What would it take for me to transfer ownership of my possessions to God?

If Generosity is a hallmark of a lived-out faith and a testament to it, how am I doing?

Generosity is giving freely of what we have received from a God who has freely given everything for us.
How freely do I give?

Each of us has opportunities every day to be generous with our:

- Time
- Kindness
- Speech
- forbearance with others
- facial expressions
- homes
- recognition of the marginalised
- commitment to justice
- commitment to address climate change
- witness to Jesus ...

"If we don't respond, who can tell what rivers will not flow, what mighty things will not get done?" (Selwyn Hughes)

Jesus said, 'You cannot serve both God and Money' (Matthew 6:24). How can I serve God with money?

In what ways is money my "backup plan" in case God fails me – perhaps through health catastrophes or a long retirement in old age? What would be the impact on my faith if I were to work without a net – or with less of a net – trusting God will catch me?

If an outsider were to look at how I use my time, my energy and my resources, what would they learn about my priorities?

When have I regretted giving?

How much money do I need? Will my answer always be 'more'? Or can I set a finish line for myself, and give away everything beyond that?

The bible shows that God's generosity is wonderfully reckless. When Jesus turned the water into wine (John 2) it was equivalent to 700 bottles of wine. What does this suggest about God's nature?

If God's giving to us is like the filling of a cup, does my giving to others reveals the cup running over?
We looked at the story of Mary in John 12:1-8. The starting point for understanding her generosity is her relationship with and gratitude to Jesus. It is this relationship that inspires and shapes the generosity, and her generosity is in response to it. What does my level of generosity suggest about my relationship with and gratitude to God?