

**Welcome to the
Common Ground Café!**



Sunday, April 14, 2019

**Giving to the Poor
A Study of Matthew 6:1-4; 1 John 3:16-18**

www.hillcrest.church



What is the most inspiring experience you've had working with the poor or those in distress?

In our study through the Sermon on the Mount, in the first half of Matthew 6 he discusses the right way and the wrong way to conduct three religious practices. Answer the following questions:

- ❖ What religious practice is discussed in Matthew 6:2-4?
- ❖ What religious practice is discussed in Matthew 6:5-6?
- ❖ What religious practice is discussed in Matthew 6:16-18?
- ❖ In Matthew 6:1, he says that these three things are how you "practice your righteousness." What does that mean?

Across the next few weeks we will look at how to "practice your righteousness" in these three ways. We begin today with what the Bible says about giving to the needy. We'll focus on 1 John 3:16-18. We'll see the command God gave us (verse 18), the measurement God takes of us (verse 17), and the pattern God set for us (verse 16).

The Command God Gave Us:
God commands us to _____
the burdens of those in need.

Read 1 John 3:18.

Richard Lovelace said, "The prophets habitually called for a threefold repentance on the part of God's people: the rejection of...false religion; the renunciation of...personal sins; and a renewal of caring for the poor..." (*Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, page 382). Which of those three do you think churches emphasize the **most** in our day? Which is emphasized the **least** in our day?

Pastor Tom suggested there are three levels of help we can give:

Relief is immediate aid at a point of crisis. Give some examples.

Development is providing what someone needs to become self-sufficient. Give some examples.

Reform is the act of addressing the systems that put people in economic hardship and keep them there. Give some examples.

Read Proverbs 13:23 and Proverbs 14:23. Conservatives tend to blame poverty on poor character and ignore unjust social systems, while liberals tend to blame poverty on unjust social systems and ignore poor character. Which of the two Proverbs talks about poor character and which of the two talks about unjust social systems?

**The Measurement God Takes of Us:
God measures the _____
of our faith by how we help those in need**

Read 1 John 3:17.

Strictly speaking, 1 John 3:17 commands us to meet the needs of our spiritual family (in other words, fellow Christians). Pastor Tom said we should at least start there, because so many of the poor and vulnerable in our city and around the world are Christians. But read Galatians 6:10 and discuss how that verse widens our responsibility to even those who are not believers.

According to Matthew 5:16, what is often the world's reaction when they see Christians responding to human need? Have you personally seen this respect among nonbelievers toward Christian service?

**The Pattern God Set for Us:
God demonstrates by his own _____
how we must sacrifice for those in need**

Read 1 John 3:16.

The cross isn't just the way we're saved; it's also the pattern for how we live the saved life! Match the topic on the left with the verse on the right.

The Cross and Marriage	Philippians 2:3-11
The Cross and Forgiveness	2 Corinthians 8:8-9
The Cross and the Poor	Ephesians 4:32
The Cross and Selfishness	Ephesians 5:25

“I would like to believe that a heart for the poor ‘sleeps’ down in a Christian's soul until it is awakened.”

Tim Keller, *Generous Justice*, 107

Conclusion

In Matthew 6, Jesus said you “practice your righteousness” in three ways: charity, prayer, and fasting. We will begin a six-week study on the Lord’s Prayer next week, Easter Sunday. Start your group’s prayer list today with the names of those you hope to bring to the first week of that study.



Close with praise reports and prayer requests