

For the week of December 3-9, 2017

Based on Pastor Tucker's message from December 3

Our Generous God

Best Way to Prepare for Your Group? Listen to the teaching and read the appropriate scripture. Please give emphasis to the latter. These notes are prepared on Fridays. Sometimes, the sermon gets modified right before service. So, allow for flexibility. Remember, your time together isn't meant to be a re-teaching of the most recent lesson. Instead, the discussion points and questions are designed to encourage group members to share insight and application of what they've learned from God's Word—and thereby grow closer to the Lord and each other.

[Format for the Evening]

WELCOME:

Get to know each other. Re-introduce yourselves if need be and welcome any newcomers. Invite those new to the group to share a little about their lives and Christian experience. Spend some time talking about real-life issues that may have come up during prayer or fellowship time the previous week. These Community Groups are more than Bible studies. They are designed to help believers form deep and lasting relationships.

KEY PASSAGE: *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* —Isaiah 9:6

THINK ABOUT THE TEACHING: Jesus is the incarnation of the generosity of God.

Christmas is a season of giving. All around the world people are preparing to give gifts to loved ones, charities are asking for help to be able to give to those less fortunate. The reason we, as Christians, care about giving at this time of year, or any other time, is because we were created in the image of a God who is indescribably giving. It can be difficult to reconcile the materialism of the season with celebrating the coming of Christ. But if we use this opportunity to emulate the extravagantly generous heart of our loving God, we can pour out the love we have received in practical expressions of generosity.

The example of Jesus giving Himself for us is beyond compare. He humbled Himself, let go of His perfect unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He let go of His reputation and everything He had in heavenly places. And He did it gladly, for the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). The gift of Jesus is seen in the nativity and in His ministry as much as the cross. During His time on Earth, Jesus gave sermons, told parables, and performed miracles to reveal the incredibly generous heart of God.

He told of a vineyard owner who vastly overpaid his workers (Matthew 20). He told of a father who gave half of everything he owned to a rebellious and selfish son. And when the son returned after having wasted it all, his father gave an extravagant feast to celebrate his return (Luke 15:11-32). He told of a noble man who put together such a big banquet that he had more seats and food than guests, even after he sent his servant to go get everyone he could find (Luke 14:16-23). Through all the examples He gave, Jesus was essentially showing us that we have no idea how generous and loving God really is. Jesus told the disciples where to cast their nets, and they pulled up more fish than the boat could hold (John 21:4-6). He wasn't teaching them that He was an amazing fisherman. He was teaching that if we listen to Him, He is the incarnation and source of more provision than we could ever imagine.

There is a lesson to be learned from the way our children approach Christmas. They know that we love them, and want to give them good things. So they write lists. They don't hesitate to ask for the things they want. And on Christmas morning, we experience the joy of giving them something that will bless them.

We get to see their reaction to receiving something we've planned and kept as a surprise. That gives us a glimpse into how God feels. We know how to give good gifts, and we are evil. How much more does God want to do for us (Luke 11:13). And lest we forget, we have Christmas every year to remind us. Christmas is not just a celebration of the fact that God loves us, it's also that He is so generous and overflowing in the way He gives to us. *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32). What we see in Jesus is the ultimate gift of God's generosity. God's generous heart incarnate. With that as our example, and with the heart of burden-free giving without expectation or self-exalting agenda, there is no limit to the ways we can give. We can have meaningful interactions and give our time to someone who is lonely. We can give to those less fortunate than us. If what we get from Christmas is a view of Jesus that shows us His love for us, we have received the greatest gift.

TALK ABOUT THE TEACHING:

1. Have you ever felt that God doesn't always give you what you need?
2. What is it about your view of God that holds you back from asking, and makes you think He won't give to you liberally?
3. If you have the generous mindset in Christ Jesus, in what ways can you give beyond what is easy, noticed, safe, or brings you glory?
4. In what ways have you felt burdened to give, whether to a church, a family member, or someone in need?

THINK ABOUT THE TEACHING: Jesus is the Gift, not the means to an end.

Jesus is the reason for the season. It's been said so many times throughout the years that it can almost become cliché. The truth is, He is the reason we celebrate. But perhaps our perception of why we celebrate Him needs to be adjusted. Jesus is the ultimate gift of God. He was sent by our Heavenly Father to die on a cross so that we may receive forgiveness, redemption, salvation, and newness of life. But a lot of us need to take our perception a step further.

The reason that it matters that we receive all the things the cross provides is because they are the means by which we will be with Jesus forever. The reason we want to go to Heaven is to be with Jesus. The reason we want to avoid Hell is because it is eternal separation from the One we love. Salvation is actually the means to Jesus as the gift. Because He died for us, we get to experience His Kingdom, and be with Him forever. He gave everything so that we can spend eternity with Him. If Heaven was full of all the great things, but without Jesus, it wouldn't be Heaven. We celebrate the birth of Jesus for so many reasons. This Christmas, let's praise Him for coming here to save us, for making the ultimate sacrifice for us, and for loving us so much that He made a way for us to be with Him forever.

TALK ABOUT THE TEACHING:

1. In what ways do we see Jesus as the means to an end?
2. Are there areas of your perception of Jesus that need to be adjusted? How can this fresh perspective of Jesus as the ultimate gift change or enhance the way you celebrate Christmas?

TAKE TIME TO PRAY:

Please pray that God would show believers how to live like Jesus, empowered by the leading of the Holy Spirit so that their divinely inspired and life-changing love reveals God to the world around them. Pray that the lives of the family members at Calvary Boise glorify God and draw others into His Kingdom. Pray that we will be actively engaged in pursuing revival.

TRANSITION TO REAL LIFE:

Before you head home take some time to talk about the week ahead, make note of any needs and prayer requests, and enjoy each other's company. That's what family does.

Note: *Pastor Tucker welcomes your feedback. Please email him at tucker@ccboise.org with your insight.*

WEEKLY PRAYER REQUESTS

“But I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” –Luke 22:32

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” –Philippians 2:5

Our faith in the intercession of Jesus must not only be based on the fact that He prays on our behalf when we do not or cannot pray. We should also have faith that, as the Author of our life and our faith, He draws us to pray in unison with Him. Our prayers must be a work of faith in the sense that we can trust that Jesus, our intercessor, communicates His whole life in us through prayer and in the midst of His unique prayerfulness breathes life into our own ability to pray. –Andrew Murray

About the Author: Andrew Murray was a Dutch Christian Reformed missionary sent from Scotland to South Africa. He founded the South African General Mission and was a popular itinerant preacher when he lost his voice for an extended period of time. Unable to speak he wrote more than 240 books, including many Christian classics, before his voice was miraculously restored. He lived from 1828 until 1917.

Our Community Life Group:

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Our International Missions: Send Hope India

We recently received this plea from Pastor Guna in India. Please lift that ministry's needs to our Lord.

“As you may be aware, Calvary Chapel Trust of India is at a crossroads and facing many challenges. We strongly believe that the Lord God will enable us to succeed, since this is His ministry. But, we also want you to know that one of the major challenges facing the ministry is financial constraint, resulting in the following change to our services:

- We have temporarily stopped operating Bible Schools in three locations because we are unable to support the ministries of new evangelists who complete their training.
- There is almost no increase in the number of sponsors for children in the Home of Hope, even though we are taking in HIV infected children referred by the government.
- We are not able to spend on maintenance of buildings/vehicles since there is a shortage in the regular budget.
- We are unable to continue training our child-care workers and volunteers due to lack of resources.
- We are unable to offer medical assistance to HIV-infected patients.”

Prayer Requests for our Junior High & High School Ministry

“Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.” –1 Timothy 4:12

- Pray for a fresh wave of the Spirit to engulf these ministries.
- Pray that the upcoming winter events will draw students to each other and the Lord.
- Pray that the students will carry the Gospel into their schools and neighbors and cause great revival.