

## Message Discussion Guide

### THE GOSPEL DEMANDS RADICAL GIVING

*The Church at Brook Hills,*

*Dr. David Platt*

*October 5, 2008*

*Luke 16:19-31*

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

## Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

### Option 1

Ask the learners to begin your time by discussing the following questions in regard to caring for the poor and needy:

- Do you think that the church in America has done well in caring for the poor and needy? Why or why not? What about individual Christians? Why or why not?
- What are things that hinder the church from radically helping the poor and needy?
- What are some reservations that people, including Christians, have for giving to the poor? Do you feel that these reservations are from applying wisdom or excuses to hold on to our possessions?
- Who should have the larger role in caring for the poor and needy: the church or the government?
- What are some opportunities that you, personally, have had to take care of the poor and needy? How did this change your perspective of your responsibility to the poor and needy?
- How have these opportunities to care for the poor and needy affected your relationship with Christ?

Explain to the learners that we will be discussing how the gospel demands a radical view of giving. We will be learning how caring for the poor and needy is commanded over and over both in the Old and New Testaments. It characterized Jesus' ministry and He tells us that it should characterize the ministry of His followers.

### Option 2

Read Proverbs 21:13 and 28:27 and ask the following questions:

- What do these verses say are the consequences for not helping the poor and needy?
- Does this seem harsh? Does this seem uncharacteristic for God, who is love? Explain your answers.

Follow that with this thought: Derek Webb is a Christian recording artist with a song entitled *This Too Shall Be Made Right*. The last verse of the song says:

"I don't know the sufferings of people outside my front door  
And I join the oppressors of those I choose to ignore  
I'm trading comfort for human life  
And that's not just murder, it's suicide  
And this too shall be made right."

- Is this song lyric based on biblical principles or is the songwriter's point overstated or over exaggerated?
- What are practical ways that we contribute to oppressing the poor and needy?

Explain to the learners that today, we will be discussing how God responds the poor and how His people are expected to respond to the poor. We will also look at what judgment faces those who do not help the poor and needy.

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***Review the Message . . .***

**The Foundations...**

- **We do not compare...**
  - **Jesus' life is our \_\_\_\_\_ standard \_\_\_\_\_.**
- **We do not despair...**
  - **Jesus' presence is our \_\_\_\_\_ hope \_\_\_\_\_.**
- **We avoid apathy...**
  - **Jesus' words are our \_\_\_\_\_ authority \_\_\_\_\_.**
- **We avoid lethargy...**
  - **Jesus' glory is our \_\_\_\_\_ goal \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Discussion and Application Questions**

- How does comparing ourselves to others hinder the way we focus on God's Word? What should we focus on? (We either think we are doing really good or really bad in applying God's Word, which can both be sources of pride. This can lead us to think that our neighbor needs to hear something more than we do. Instead, our focus must be on Jesus' words "Follow me.").
- How can looking at radical truths lead us to despair? How can we battle this despair? Where do we get the power to walk in the radical truths of Jesus? (We can have a tendency to say, "I don't know where to start," or "I have so far to go that it's not worth the battle." But, God does not leave us to figure out how to follow Jesus. He walks with us and leads us every step of the way).
- Why do we often think that we have a choice about whether or not we have to obey the hard truths we encounter? Why are some people who call themselves Christians apparently apathetic about the poor? What characteristic of Jesus can help us from being apathetic, thinking we can obey some truths and not others?
- The Bible uses words such as work, wrestle, struggle, and fight to describe the Christian life. Why are we often tempted to take the easy road and choose not to apply hard truths, instead of fighting "the good fight of faith?"

**The Story...**

- **A Divine Contrast:**
  - **God responds to the needs of the poor with \_\_\_\_\_ compassion \_\_\_\_\_.**
  - **God responds to those who neglect the poor with \_\_\_\_\_ condemnation \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Discussion Questions**

- Remind the learners that you are discussing Luke 16:19-31: the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Enlist a volunteer to read Luke 16:14-15 in order to get the context of the passage. Describe the people that Jesus is addressing in this passage. (Lovers

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of money who justify themselves in the sight of men. David described them as religious people who loved money and stuff, and ignored the poor around them.)

- Enlist a volunteer to read Luke 16:19-31 and ask the following questions.
- How does v. 19 describe the rich man? How can we be like the rich man?
- Lazarus means, "God is my help." Why is it significant that Lazarus is named in this parable? (It indicates that God shows compassion to and helps the poor. He knows the name of the poor man, but the rich man remains nameless).
- Enlist 2 volunteers to read 1 Samuel 2:8 and Psalm 140:12. How does God demonstrate His power in these passages?
- Invite a volunteer to read Luke 7:20-22. What is significant about Jesus preaching the gospel to the poor and needy? (It is evidence that He is the Messiah).
- According to the previous two questions, God is known as the God who is for the poor and Jesus is known as the Messiah because of His ministry to the poor. What does this imply about God's people? (They should be characterized as a people who are for the poor and minister to the poor).
- Enlist a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 15:7-11. What do v. 8, 10 and 11 say should be our actions and attitudes toward the poor? What does v. 10 imply will be the result of neglecting to have these actions and attitudes? (The Lord will not bless you).
- Read Ezekiel 16:48-49. What does this passage say was the sin of Sodom?
- Invite a member of the group to read Matthew 25:31-46. What does Jesus say are characteristics of a true believer (i.e. the sheep)? What does He say are characteristics of the unbeliever (i.e. the goats)? Remind the learners that it wasn't that the goats did anything deliberately wrong to poor and needy, but that they did **nothing at all**.

#### **Application . . .**

- We have looked at what God thinks about the poor and needy. How do we generally see the poor and needy? Whose responsibility is it to do something about the need of the poor (the government, the church, individuals, etc.)?
- Read (or review) Proverbs 28:27 and ask the following question. Do we really believe this? What are ways that we close our eyes to the poor?
- We often think that Sodom was condemned because of sexual sin, but that's only part of it. Why are we so selective about what moral sins outrage us? In other words, why does homosexuality and adultery offend us, but we do not get as offended by those who neglect to take care of the poor and needy?
- Read Proverbs 14:31 and ask the following questions. Why do we not see neglecting the poor and needy as offensive to God as we do sexual sin or various other sins? What are things that we can do to have our hearts and minds changed concerning this?
  
- **An Eternal Consequence:**  
**If we indulge ourselves and neglect the poor...**
  - Earth will be our                      **heaven**                     .

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- Eternity will be our \_\_\_\_\_ **hell** \_\_\_\_\_.

### Discussion Questions

- Invite someone to read Luke 16:25-26 again. According to Abraham, where did the rich man receive his reward? What about the poor man? What does this tell us about the relationship between earth and eternity? (How we respond to the poor now will be evidence of our destination for eternity)
- According to this passage, will there ever be a time when mercy is not offered?

#### *Application . . .*

- Are we characterized as people who are destined for heaven in view of how we respond to the poor?
- What are things that we can do as a group to help those who are outside our gate? Locally? Globally?

- **A Clear Choice:**

- Continue in hollow \_\_\_\_\_ **religion** \_\_\_\_\_ that neglects the poor.
  - Caring for the poor is not an optional \_\_\_\_\_ **extra** \_\_\_\_\_ in salvation.
  - Caring for the poor is necessary \_\_\_\_\_ **evidence** \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation.
- Turn in honest \_\_\_\_\_ **repentance** \_\_\_\_\_ to care for the poor.
  - Hear the Word \_\_\_\_\_ **humbly** \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Obey the Word \_\_\_\_\_ **quickly** \_\_\_\_\_.

### Discussion and Application Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read James 2:14-17. What does James say is evidence of saving faith? Why do you think that James uses this example to define good works?
- Invite someone to read 1 John 3:14-18. What does John say is the evidence of love? What does this passage say about those who fail to help the needy around us?
- Can our neighbors look at the works of our lives and see that we have saving faith?
- What opportunities do you know of have in our church and in our community to help those in need? Do we have a tendency to look for these opportunities, avoid these opportunities, or simply remain indifferent to these opportunities?
- Read Luke 16:27-31. What is the rich man's desire? What does Abraham say the rich man's brothers have to lead them to repentance?
- What do we have that can lead us to repent of the way we have responded to the poor?
- What would it look like for us to repent and begin caring for the poor as we should?

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**The Bottom Line...**

**We are NOT motivated to care for the poor by           guilt          ;  
we are motivated to care for the poor by the           Gospel          .**

***Application . . .***

- Read 2 Corinthians 8:9 to the group and ask the following question. What does it mean when it says that Jesus became poor so that others' might become rich in Christ? How can we follow Jesus' example?
- Challenge the learners to think of those who are at their "gate." What is something practical that we can do this week to care for those who are at our gate?