

Almsgiving

Bible Study at a Glance:

Almsgiving is at the heart of the nature of God. It is all about love. God identifies with the poor and receives our gifts to them as being given to himself as acts of love. He rewards us for our Almsgiving and wants us to emulate him as cheerful givers.

(Explain to the Group) We're going to read several passages and then open it up for discussion. Notice in the passages how almsgiving flows from the first and greatest commandment.

(Explain to the Group) = You don't have to read this word for word, but this is the general idea of what to explain before moving on.

- **Q: These are questions to ask the whole group**
 - *A: Hopefully the group arrives at most of the answers on their own, but if they don't, redirect the discussion towards these answers, and be sure to tell the group the answers if no one quite got it.*

CCC/Verses and quotes to read out loud are in boxes.

Matthew 22:36-40: *Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"³⁷ He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."³⁸ This is the greatest and the first commandment.³⁹ The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.⁴⁰ The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.*

Matthew 25:31-40: *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne,³² and all the nations^l will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.³³ He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.³⁴ Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me,³⁶ naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?³⁹ When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'⁴⁰ And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'*

Isaiah 58:6-7: *Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke? 7 Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh?*

CCC 2443: *God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay." It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence.*

- **Q: What are some important lessons or points we can draw from these passages? What stands out from them as revealing God's mind or heart with respect to almsgiving?**
 - A:
 - Some points to make sure come out are:
 - That Jesus identifies directly with the poor. He says "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me".
 - That giving to the poor should be a regular part of our lives. We can't pray and fast and ignore giving to the poor (Isaiah passage). We are recognized by Christ as his chosen ones by what we do for the poor (CCC passage).
 - That we are rewarded for taking care of the needy (we "inherit the kingdom")
- **Q: Why do you think almsgiving is so important to God?**
 - A: It flows out of the greatest commandments, to love God and one another. Almsgiving is loving our neighbor in a fundamental way. The nature of God is love, he is love itself. Consequently, the call to give to the needy stems from the very nature of God.

- **Q: In these passages, we see Christ identifying directly with the poor. Why do you think he does that? And do you ever think of your almsgiving as giving to Jesus himself?**

- **Q: Imagine Christianity without almsgiving. What would it look like?**
 - *A: This question is intended to be thought-provoking, to try to see why almsgiving is so important by imagining the absence of it.*

- **Q: Is it sometimes hard to give? Why or why not?**
 - *A: Allow the group to share their thoughts then have them read the following verses..*

2 Corinthians 9:6-7: Consider this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- **Q: We all have probably experienced giving cheerfully and not cheerfully. When is it cheerful for us and when is it not? And why?**

- **Q: How do you think almsgiving makes us more like Christ?**
 - *A: There can be many answers to this. God himself is very generous. Everything we have is a gift from him, even our very existence. If he was willing to give his very self to us by coming and dying on the cross for us, we in turn can be like him by giving of ourselves back to him, including our wealth.*