

APPLICATION

- Matthew 6:3 encourages us to have the right heart when we give to those in need. What action steps will you take this week in light of this? Are there things you need to start or stop doing?
- Reflect and ask God to search your heart about your motivation for giving. Pray for your giving to be an overflow of your love and devotion to God.
- Who among the people in your close proximity are in need today (relative, neighbor, classmate, coworker, employee)? In what way can you extend God's compassion to them?

PRAYER

- Thank God that we can experience His grace more and more as we get to know Him through spiritual disciplines.
- Ask God to give you a heart of compassion for those in need. Pray that your motivation in giving would be to extend His grace and experience Him more in your life.
- Pray for those who are in need in your close proximity. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you present the gospel to them as you serve and care for them.

Rhythms OF GRACE

Giving | When You Give . . .

WEEK 1

WARM-UP

- What is your daily routine or regimen? What happens when you don't get to do your routine?
- Do you have any habits or things you do on a regular basis that have positive effects on your life? Share one with the group.
- What do you want to be known for? Tell us one thing you regularly do in light of it.

WORD *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."* **MATTHEW 6:1**

(Read also **MATTHEW 6:2-4.**)

Spiritual disciplines are attitudes and practices which strengthen our relationship with God and bring us to a place where we experience the different aspects of His grace in Christ. These are an essential part of our walk with Him and a response to His love. We are to practice these regularly and consistently—learning from Jesus and making these rhythms of grace part of our lives. These disciplines can be done individually and as a church community.

As seen in Scripture, traditions and practices are prevalent in Jewish culture. They observed a lot of dos and don'ts. However, many somehow missed the crucial part of these practices—having a right heart and attitude before God. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the crowds about the right heart and manner to do these things. Today, let's look at what Jesus said about the act of giving.



1 | We are called to give to the needy.

"Thus, when you give to the needy . . ." MATTHEW 6:2

When Jesus was talking to the crowds about these practices, He knew that the practice of giving was already ingrained in their culture and was expected of them. Their giving also was specifically to the needy—usually pertaining to the widows, orphans, and foreigners. God wanted His people to care for and uplift those in need. As God has provided for us and met our needs, we can also be a channel of His grace and mercy. It is not just about giving money, but caring for the needy by serving them. In what ways have you served those in need?

2 | When we give to the needy, we do not do so to be praised by others.

"Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward." MATTHEW 6:2

Since giving to the needy was regularly done in their culture, there may have been a temptation for some Jews to put their actions on display. It was as if they were hoping to be praised and approved by others. As disciples, giving to the needy is not about simply adhering to the law or being known for our obedience, but about extending God's love to others

(Leviticus 19:18). Jesus said hypocrites who sound their trumpets when they give have received their reward. What do you think was their reward? Why do you think Jesus said this?

3 | When we give to the needy, we do it before the Father.

³"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

MATTHEW 6:3-4

The Jews had a perspective of an unapproachable, holy God. But Jesus introduced another aspect of God that was revolutionary to them—a relational father. For us today, we have been adopted into God's family through Jesus' work on the cross. God is unlike men who are pleased simply with a superficial adherence to the law. When we give to those in need, we can also rest in the knowledge that *our Father who sees in secret* sees how we give. It is not about the place where we give, but whether our hearts are set to simply be seen or to truly obey and please God. Our generosity also enables others to experience Him because through it we reflect who our Father is. Why is it important to practice spiritual disciplines with the right heart?