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Sunday School That Clicks

Lesson 12 / August 23, 2009

The Joy of Giving

for use as

STEP 1 

Lesson 12
Focus:

A generous person will be blessed in return.

Lesson 12
Bible Basis:

Proverbs 19:17; 22:1-4, 8-9, 22-23; 23:10-11

The class will talk about the relationship between giving and receiving—do we often give just to get something in return? What makes us truly generous people in God’s eyes?

OPENING ACTIVITY: *Giving or Greedy?*

We may go to church, tithe, or volunteer in our communities, but are we doing these things because we love God or because we want to be blessed in return? God desires our obedience but does not want our sacrifices without our hearts. Giving is a reward in itself, but only if we are doing it with a pure heart. God knows the difference.

Ask your students to form pairs, and in alphabetical order by first name, give each student a different pair of words. The first person should get “caring” and “giving”; the second person should get the words “self-centered” and “greedy.” Ask them to think carefully about each pair of words, then write a very short story (a couple of sentences) in which they feature people acting out those words. Have each person read the story to his or her partner, then discuss these questions:

- ▶ Did you use the assigned words to describe yourself or someone else in your story? Explain why.
- ▶ Which words would you want to describe yourself? Why?
- ▶ If so, do you feel compelled to make some changes within yourself?

OPENING STORY [Read it aloud to your class, or make copies and pass it around]:

CHURCH SHARES BLESSINGS AT FAIR

MIDDLETOWN, MARYLAND—Sometimes, it isn’t about the cost—sometimes it’s important to give for the sake of giving.

That’s what members of Fellowship Baptist Church thought when they planned a day of fun, games, music, food and pony rides for the Middletown community that has welcomed them—all free of charge.

Lesson 12
Memory Verse

He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.

—Proverbs 19:17

One Saturday last month, Memorial Park in Middletown was a bustling place, with a moonbounce, inflatable sliding board, carnival games, temporary tattoos, a live band, and displays from community organizations.

Everything, including the food, was free. Children's games were set up like an arcade, complete with tickets awarded for playing. As families left, children could take their tickets to the prize table and cash in the tickets they won throughout the day.

"The Lord has blessed us this past year, and we wanted to pass that blessing along to the community," Jeff Moss, pastor of the fledgling church, said Friday. "We're a young church, and this is the biggest thing we've ever done."

Fellowship, which averages about thirty-five people at its weekly service, meets on Sundays at the Middletown Municipal Center.

Citing the gifts that Jesus Christ gave freely, Moss said it's important to follow that example. The pastor said he is aware of surveys that have been taken asking people their main reasons for not attending church.

"One of the top reasons is money," Moss said. "People think they're always being asked for money." He knows that money is a necessity and churches have to be able to pay their bills, but raising money shouldn't be a reason for existence.

At Fellowship, members don't even pass the plate, he said. A dish sits in the back of the meeting space, and members give what they are able to give when they're able to give. With that gentle approach, Moss said Fellowship's giving is five times what it was this time last year, and the group has built up a bounty of about \$11,000.

"So we've taken about \$4,000 to hold this event today," Moss said.

The park remained crowded throughout the six-hour event. Laura Ward, mother of six-year-old twins Colin and Lilli, said they had lunch at the Main Cup on Main Street and saw the signs advertising the event.

"I felt compelled to make a donation. It's too generous," she said of the church's gift. "But it is a nice community event."

The fair was a collaborative effort, with members of other churches participating as well. A band of musicians from the Damascus Road Community Church and Crossroads Fellowship played two one-hour sets. It was the first time they had played together as a group, according

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to Brett Barry.

“I just grabbed a bunch of musicians that play well and from the heart,” Barry said. “It’s a gift to the community—to take the essence of who God is into the community.”

Moss said he and his church members are pleased with the event and hope they have the resources to do it again next year.

“Everything came together, even the weather,” he said. “We have a couple of real strong prayers in the church; we put them in charge of the weather, and they came through for us.”

[Now form small groups and have your class discuss the following.]

- ▶ Have you ever given to a cause or individual because you felt obligated or pressured?
- ▶ Have you ever given to a cause or individual just because you wanted to share your blessings with them?
- ▶ Think about this quote from the article: “The Lord has blessed us [the church] this past year, and we wanted to pass that blessing along to the community.” During a recession, why wouldn’t the church keep all of the offering money for everyday operations instead of spending part of it on the community?
- ▶ Why do you think attendees at this church have given more this year when there is no formal offering taken up during the service?
- ▶ In terrible economic times, why do you think the Lord keeps providing for this small church in the abundance He has? Has He done similar things for you or your church?
- ▶ How is your church sharing with your community in “surprising” ways, like having a free carnival?

[When you are finished with the questions, go on to Step 2 in your *Adult Teacher’s Guide*, where you read the Scripture and begin to discuss it. Your Step 4 appears below.]

News Sources:

The *Frederick News-Post* – “Church Shares Blessings at Fair.”
 [http://www.fredericknewspost.com/sections/archives/display_detail.htm?StoryID=99349]

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STEP 4

Lesson 12 Focus:

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GIVING OUT OF PURE LOVE

T rue Christian giving comes from the heart. Love of others, and not the desire for rewards, should inspire our giving. The idea of getting something in return should not be considered when we share with others. Although we shouldn't be generous to others just to benefit ourselves, the Bible does tell us that God rewards our giving: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38).

When you are giving from the heart, it is very satisfying feeling. The desire to give back can inspire our brothers and sisters in Christ, those we work with, and even a whole community. .

[Activity]

The students should return to the small groups they had in Step 1 and discuss these questions.

-  Why do you think God blesses those who unselfishly help others?
-  What reward have you received after giving to someone else?
-  What are some of the ways we can be rewarded for our giving?
-  This week, as the Lord leads you, think of some generous giving you could do. The giving does not have to be just money. For instance, you could do something nice for one or two people you know. You could compliment them, give them a card or write them a note, buy them lunch, be a listening ear, help them with a project or homework assignment, or pray with them or for them.

Close the session in prayer. Thank God for His many gifts and blessings to us, and ask Him to help us be a channel of those blessings to others, that we might give generously to those we know and even to those we don't know.

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