

GIVING FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Small Group Leader's Guide – Lesson One



BEFORE THE LESSON:

- Each member of the group should be given a copy of the *Plastic Donuts* book and a Participant's guide for session 1.
- Each member should be asked to read the Introduction and Chapters 1-3 in the book and complete the questions in the Participant's Guide. (As you complete the questions yourself, be prepared to share your own notes, to help the group open up to discussion)
- Pray for your leadership of this group. Pray for the members who will attend your group.
- Remember that this topic deals with finances and financial choices. Make it clear to the group that we will not be discussing personal finances, but rather reviewing scripture to understand God's perspective on the gifts we give.
- This study is probably unlike any study of financial giving you and your group has experienced. Expect to find clarity, freedom, and a new perspective on gifts!

PRAYER TIME:

- Pray for an open heart to truth from God's Word
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth and bring understanding
- Pray for each member to learn something from this study that will transform their perspective and actions

INTRODUCTION:

This is a study of financial giving. I want to make it clear that we will not be discussing personal finances or details about our giving, but rather reviewing scripture to understand God's perspective on the gifts we give.

We will all be challenged by what we see in scripture, and have moments of freedom as well, but there is no agenda behind the study except to find clarity.

Financial giving is something we all do – and most people have questions, doubts, and sometimes even negative feelings about the subject. There must be more to the story – and that's why we're here.

NOTES:

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? DISCUSSION – CHAPTER 1

Remind the group of the donut story from pages 7-8.

- How did you relate to the donut story of Jeff and his daughter?
 - Have you ever experienced anything like that?
 - Can you see how God might view our giving with that same perspective?
 - How does that make you feel about how you have given to God before?
 - How could it change the way we view giving gifts to God in the future?
- Would you like to know really what the Bible teaches about our giving to God? Does it excite you? Scare you a bit?
- How would you feel if you knew you could give in such a way to delight the heart of God?

? DISCUSSION – CHAPTER 2

▲ Begin by having someone look up and read Genesis 4:3-5 and Hebrews 11:4

Does it surprise you to think that some gifts to God are acceptable and others are unacceptable?

Have you ever thought about “pleasing God” with your giving? That God would see your gift and have special regard for it? (Why do we look at gifts we give others as different than gifts we give to God?)

Can you recall a time when you gave a gift that you thought would have pleased the heart of God? (Don't share specific amounts. Just give the general story)?

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? DISCUSSION – CHAPTER 2 - NOT ALL GIFTS ARE THE SAME (continued)

What do you think acceptable means?
In the world? In Scripture?

- Look up and read Psalm 19:14 –
Describe acceptable/pleasing
- Look up and read Romans 12:1 –
Describe acceptable/pleasing

We know in the Old Testament, that many of the gifts given to God were animal sacrifices. God was very specific for many of these gifts about the condition of the animal to be given.

Look up and read Leviticus 1:3 & 10

- What condition did God expect?
- Why do you think He required an animal in such a condition?
- Was it a picture of something else?
Something in the future?
(2 Corinthians 9:15 and 1 Peter 1:19)
- What was the result of such offerings?
(Leviticus 1:9 & 13)
- How does this resemble the offering in Ephesians 5:2?

Look up and read Malachi 1:1-10

- What was wrong with the gifts offered by the priests?
- Why do you think they offered such gifts to God?

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? DISCUSSION – CHAPTER 2 - NOT ALL GIFTS ARE THE SAME (continued)

Look up Philippians 4:18

- Discuss how Paul describes God's view of this offering.
- Why do you think he describes a financial offering with these terms?
- Do you see the connection to the Old Testament gifts?

How would you now describe an acceptable gift today?

Can we now see that not all gifts are the same? (That some are acceptable and some are not) How does that make you feel?

? DISCUSSION – CHAPTER 3: THE AMOUNT MATTERS

This is the first major biblical truth we will discover about giving from this study. Why was the plastic donut gift not the same when it came from Jeff's seven-year-old son?

Does the amount of the gifts we give to God really matter?



? DISCUSSION – CHAPTER 3: THE AMOUNT MATTERS (continued)

Refresh their memory about the story of John and Amy from pages 36-37

- Why was Amy so upset?
- What had John failed to understand?

Look up and read 2 Samuel 24:20-25

- Why did Araunah offer the land, wood, and oxen to David for free?
- Why did David demand to pay full price? (1 Chronicles 21:24)
- Does your giving “cost” you anything?

Have you ever received a gift that you knew was costly? How did you respond?

Have you ever received a gift that you knew was not well thought out or was of much less value than you expected? How did that make you feel?

What are the amounts that matter to you? Amounts that you know you set aside every month.

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? DISCUSSION – CHAPTER 3: THE AMOUNT MATTERS (continued)

What are the amounts that don't matter as much?
You may or may not set them aside on a regular basis.

Do you calculate, plan, and track your giving in the same thoughtful, intentional manner as you do other expenses?

Does your lifestyle influence your giving or does your giving influence your lifestyle?

Would you say your giving engages your heart in worship? Why or why not?

Look up and read Matthew 6:21

- What do you think Jesus meant?
- How can we connect our heart to God and His objectives? (Giving an amount that matters to us)

? DISCUSSION – BRINGING IT HOME

So we have discovered several key points and one Acceptable Gift Truth we want to remember.

- Key – God views our giving from our relationship – like a Father and child
- Key – Not all gifts are the same
- Key – There are gifts that please the heart of God and gifts that do not
- Biblical Truth – From God's perspective The Amount Matters
- Remember that this is one of four truths we'll be studying – so stay tuned

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NEXT SESSION PREPARATION

- Read chapters 4-5
- Complete the participant guide questions
- Be on time for session 2
- Be ready to participate in the discussions