

Giving Study Sheet

Aim: A series of sheets to prompt group discussion around giving. This discussion may primarily lead to individual action. It should not lead necessarily to action within the group. The discussion may lead to different ways of doing things in the life of the church.

Text: Luke 8: 1-8

¹Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, ²as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

⁴When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: ⁵"A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. ⁷Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. ⁸Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" (New Revised Standard Version)

Reflection

Jesus continues his ministry 'bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God' to all those who will hear it and receive it, amongst whom are a group of women. Interestingly they are not mentioned in the other gospels until Jesus is crucified, and then not all by name.

We then come across the familiar parable of the sower (see verses 4-8) and hear Jesus teaching about the need for attentive listening and practical obedience. This is what will be 'productive' and 'fruitful' in terms of the harvest.

The women illustrate the point. They have been cured of evil spirits and infirmities and been blessed by their encounter with Jesus. They want to respond practically to what they've received from him, and give generously 'out of their resources'.

Their actions are likely to have been costly. Probably more significant than the financial outlay would have been the reaction to their generous response to the needs of Jesus and the twelve. Eyebrows would certainly have been raised, tongues would have wagged and in some quarters there would have been a real sense of scandal and outrage.

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John Graystone commenting on this passage writes: There is still a cost to following Jesus, but it is too easy to be less than fully committed and so minimise the cost, becoming like the seed that falls among thistles.

Discussion Points

These are suggestions – address as many or as few as your group wishes to do. There are no right or wrong answers.

- It is often quite difficult to sense how ‘productive’ or ‘fruitful’ we are. Sometimes though, others are able to see in our lives what we cannot perceive ourselves. You may like to talk in your group about each other’s ‘fruitfulness’ seeking to encourage and support one another.
- How have you been ‘blessed’ by Jesus? Like the women in the narrative, are there particular ‘encounters’ that you recall or is yours a more low-key experience of his love and goodness?
- What ‘resources’ do you have? How are you seeking to use them to ‘provide’ for the work of building the Kingdom of God?
- To what extent is what you seek to offer a good reflection of what you receive from God?
- What do you find the most costly aspect of being a disciple of Christ?
- What do you think about what John Graystone writes?

Concluding thought

John F Kennedy once said, “As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them”.

Most of us would never be able fully to emulate what the women were able to do in gratitude to what Jesus had done for them. But living out our gratitude is what Jesus wants of us.

Music

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
Thank you Jesus (Hillsongs)
Now thank we all our God

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