

Mar 5 - Matthew 6:1-4 "Kingdom Giving" (Leader's Guide)

Read Matthew 6:1-4.

1. Jesus assumes that prayer, fasting, and almsgiving will be practiced by all religious people. What do these practices reveal about our faith?

What does prayer show that we believe about God? What does fasting show that we believe about God? What does giving show that we believe about God? How do these practices demonstrate trust in God? By leaning into these questions, we can begin digging into our motivations for practicing them, leading to the second question.

2. Scripture claims that God knows all our motivations, and that those motivations matter to God (see Jer 17:10, 1 John 3:20-21). How does that make you feel? Do you think it's possible to act with pure motivations?

This can be either a discomfoting or comfoting thought for people – the Jeremiah passage leans on our sinfulness, while the 1 John passage says that we can find consolation in this. How do your group members feel about this thought?

3. What was the main thing that stood out to you from the sermon on Sunday?

The sermon touched on a number of things, including motivations; and the false dichotomy that is set up when we give in a prideful way, between "us" (the givers) and "them" (the receivers). It also spoke of how to avoid seeing 'us' and 'them': by understanding all of ourselves as in need of the grace of God, and all recipients of his generosity both spiritually and materially. Allow this question to bring out any particular element of the sermon that may have challenged or spoken to people in your group.

4. What were the two dangers that the sermon associated with the risk of giving? How do we avoid those dangers?

The first is seeing those on the receiving end as 'something other', a project to be fulfilled or a way to show off our own righteousness, thus diminishing their humanity. The second is slipping into a prosperity gospel in which we believe that we deserve what we have, and that therefore the poor do too.

*We avoid these dangers by **remembering** (see Deut 24:19-22 and Eph 2:4-8). Remembering that we receive because of the love of God, not because we have earned anything.*

5. Why do you think we don't like admitting need, especially material need? Where in your life have you resisted asking for help?

This point may bring up uncomfortable feelings for people. Allow lots of space in your group for discussing why it is that people may have a hard time admitting need, and maybe be prepared to give an example from your own life of a time when you were able (or not) to admit to a need. You could also give an example of a time when you were blessed through receiving and/or admitting weakness.

6. Discuss how as people of faith imitating Christ, as Kingdom-Givers, we can model a way of giving and receiving that allows us to see each other as brothers and sisters, all recipients of the grace of God.

You can look at 2 Cor 4:7-18 or 2 Cor 12:7-10 for additional meat for this question. The more we understand that we are all in need and all have something to offer, the more space we will have for those who are 'weaker' (dealing with physical, mental, emotional, or financial handicaps), understanding that we also receive from them. Considering the ministry of L'Arche might be an interesting way to approach this conversation.