

RIVERS CROSSING COMMUNITY CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide – **From Stressed to Blessed, Week #2**

February 10, 2019



Engage One Another – Introduction

1. In their book *The Paradox of Generosity*, Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson claim that, “Rather than leaving generous people on the short end of an unequal bargain, practices of generosity are actually likely instead to provide generous givers with essential goods in life – happiness, health and purpose – which money and time simply cannot buy.” Share about a circumstance where you’ve practiced generosity – whether that’s with your money, time, etc. – and experienced these personal benefits.
2. In his TED talk, Princeton philosopher Peter Singer says that living a life of effective altruism requires both the heart and mind of an individual. Discuss why empathy (the heart) and reason (the mind) are necessary ingredients to cultivate a lifestyle of generosity.

Engage One Another – Diving Deeper

3. Read Malachi 3:6-12 together. This passage from Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament, contains some of the Bible’s most thought-provoking statements on God’s heart and actions toward those who either practice or don’t practice generosity. Consider the following:
 - a. The Israelites’ lack of giving is described both as robbing God and as the cause of a curse (verses 8-9). How does this strong language compare with your understanding of what Christianity teaches about giving? What do you believe is meant by the people being under a curse?
 - b. Pulling from verse 10, Pastor Paul said that tithing (one’s giving of a “tenth part”) is a two-way test. What is the Israelites’ role in this test? What is God’s role in this test?
4. Read Deuteronomy 26:1-2, 13-15 together. According to these verses, what is the tithe and who or what are we to give it to?
5. Do you view tithing as a principle that is applicable to current followers of Jesus? Why or why not?
6. Pastor Paul shared that tithing is biblical and walked through passages that appear in both the Old and New Testaments. These include examples of tithing before God’s law was given to the Israelites (Abraham and Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18-20; Jacob in Genesis 28:22), God’s decree on tithing in the Old Testament laws (Leviticus 27:30; Deuteronomy 26), and even Jesus’ own interaction with the Pharisees and their religious practices (Matthew 23:23).
 - a. Which of these texts about tithing stands out to you the most? Explain your answer.
 - b. Read Matthew 23:23 together. As a group, dig into what Jesus is saying here. Based on this passage, is it possible that we can tithe and still be out of alignment with God’s heart?
7. Re-read Malachi 3:10-12. In addition, read 2 Chronicles 31:4-10 together. How are we to best understand the promises that God gives when we obey His principle of generosity? For instance, are God’s promises merely promises of financial blessing and security (like the Israelites experienced under the reign of Hezekiah), or are they deeper than that?
8. As a church body, we’re now two weeks into the “From Stressed to Blessed” series. Share about what, if any, steps of generosity you feel God is calling you to take. Discuss ways that your community group can hold you accountable to these steps.
 - a. Don’t forget to check out the new RC3 Giving Calculator at <https://riverscrossing.com/give>

→ Pause & Reflect:

In the Psalms, it's called a "Selah". A moment to catch your breath, rest, and praise. It's an intentional break to reflect and fully experience the moment before moving on. How did God challenge, encourage, correct, etc... as your group engaged one another in this conversation?

Engage God – Time in Prayer

Rivers Crossing exists to give people an opportunity to be fully engaged followers of Christ. Becoming a fully engaged follower of Christ involves trusting and obeying God with our finances. In Malachi 3:10, God directly calls us to put Him to the test when it comes to our financial stewardship. "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." **Have you taken that calling of God seriously?**

For many of us, the first step in taking up that calling is to take accountability for our current financial habits and then to ask God for assistance in surrendering those habits to Him. In doing so, we trust that the same words that God spoke to the Israelites – "Return to me, and I will return to you," (Malachi 3:7) – apply to us today. After all, God's character and eternal purposes do not change (Malachi 3:6).

Spend time in prayer together reflecting on struggles and roadblocks that prevent you from tithing. If you are tithing, spend time thanking God for His many blessing and faithfulness to His promises. Even if there's a lot of silence during this time of prayer, that's perfectly OK. Ask the Holy Spirit for a next step(s) for how you can honor God with your tithe in the core areas of your life – treasure, time, and talent.

Pray that as a church body, Rivers Crossing would lean into generosity. And pray that in doing so, we would reflect the heart of God to those in the city of Cincinnati.

Engage One Another + Engage God = *Extraordinary Together*