

**Contents**

Introduction – Susie Sanders	2
How to use the notes – Mark Wallace	3
Outline timetable	4
Notes:	
(1) Giving generously	5
(2) Giving as stewardship	6
(3) Giving gladly	7
(4) Gaining from giving	8
(5) Getting going with giving	9
Appendices:	
(1) Further resources	10
(2) Giving prayer	10
(3) ‘First fruits’ prayer	11
(4) Steps in giving	12
(5) Information on giving to Christ Church	

## Introduction

**Over the next month** at Christ Church we have a wonderful opportunity to think about the depth of God's generosity to us and our Christian stewardship. It's a chance to embrace the richness and diversity of our family at church and to consider prayerfully the way that each of us can contribute to God's work here through our giving, alongside the rest of our discipleship.

Beginning on **Sunday 25 April** we will explore the subjects of money, stewardship and giving, thinking about what God has to say about money in the Bible and what we give to here at Christ Church. Our three Sundays will open up these subjects, as well as addressing the important question of how we can think about a major building project during the most serious recession in living memory. In our homegroups we will unpack more about **why** we give, and there will be opportunities to consider **how** we give too.

During this time members of our Stewardship team, set up earlier this year, will be visiting every homegroup to focus particularly on the **how** of giving, and will have an important part to play in encouraging this aspect of our Christian discipleship.

An important focus of this time is our **Giving Day** on **Sunday 9 May**. This is an exciting day for our church family, with an **Auction of Promises** and **shared lunch**. As we continue to think about our individual responses over this time, we will come together as a church for a **ThanksGIVING service** at **6.30pm Sunday 23 May**, an opportunity for our whole church family to join in one big celebration together of God's goodness to us.

The notes that follow are designed to accompany the next three weeks of preaching and teaching, but are aimed to keep our homegroups chewing for longer than that. They are also suitable for your own personal study, perhaps taking some time quietly over the coming weeks to think and pray for yourself, or maybe alongside the time when you normally read the Bible and pray.

Let us all pray that the next month will give each one of us opportunities to discover more about the generosity of God and how we can respond!

**Susie Sanders**

## How to use these notes

These notes are designed to be used over a five-week period and are connected to our Sunday sermon series. Please do feel free to 'pick and mix' between the studies as best suits your group! Different groups meet at different intervals and there are sometimes gaps in the month, so there is no 'one size fits all'.

If you read through the aim of each study, you should be able to work out what will best suit your group, and at what point during the period. In particular, session 2 probably lends itself better to individual study than to group work.

Please do allow time both to worship and to pray together during each session, rather than launching straight into the material. Make sure that your prayer time at the end can include time for personal prayer within the group as well as prayer for issues relating to the subject of giving.

I know that some of your group members will be worried about talking about giving, and many will not want to talk about their own personal approach. Please do emphasize two points which I hope will reassure members:

- (1) That we are not advocating one approach for everyone,
  - (2) That no one needs to talk about their own situation unless they feel that they want to.
- In addition, do continue to emphasize confidentiality within the group.

In the appendix you will find book and web references, information about our situation at Christ Church and resources for debt counselling as well as giving.

Some people will feel that four or five weeks looking at the subject of giving is a long time! However, this is such a vital subject for Christians to grasp, covering our attitude to God, our response to God and our faith, our discipleship, our lifestyle and our response to our culture, as well as what it means to be church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We encourage you to explore this rich and rewarding area together as an adventure in faith rather than as a necessary response to financial need.

These notes are based on a set prepared in 2006 for St Paul's Dorking by Laura Parker and Paul Bryer, to whom we are very grateful, but any problems with them probably originate with me!

May God bless you as you walk with him this term.

**Mark Wallace**

Outline timetable

**Sunday 25 April** Your money and your life?

Notes **(1) Giving generously**

**Sunday 2 May** Giving in a recession

Notes **(2) Giving as stewardship & (3) Giving gladly**

**Sunday 9 May** **Giving Day** Getting going with giving

Auction of promises with shared lunch

**Sunday 16 May** Sunday after Ascension Day

Notes **(4) Gaining from giving**

**Sunday 23 May** Pentecost

6.30pm ThanksGIVING service

Notes **(5) Getting going with giving**

**(1) Giving generously**

**Aim:** To look at the biblical call to give, and explore what giving generously means for us today.

**Key verse:** *Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of your crops.* Proverbs 3:9

**Worship:** Read the First Fruits prayer in the Appendix and spend some time thanking God for all that he has made.

**Word:** Read Ecclesiastes 5:8-20.

- (1) What specific things does the Teacher here say about money and wealth?
- (2) What in particular does he say about contentment?

**Read Genesis 14:18-20 and Deuteronomy 14:22-23.**

- (3) How is the principle of tithing set out here?
- (4) Why are the Israelites told to tithe?

Under Mosaic law the provision of one tenth was made as a thanksgiving for God's continued blessing to his people, as a sacrificial offering to God, as a way of meeting the physical needs of those who were unable to provide for themselves (for example priests and widows), and some of the tithe was used by the community in celebration and feasting.

- (5) Which of these seems relevant today? Why?
- (6) What can you see as the advantages and disadvantages of tithing nowadays? Consider (a) the idea of giving a proportion of income regularly and (b) giving ten per cent.
- (7) If we think tithing has some value, how do we work out what ten per cent means? Is it an obligation? What about the idea of sacrificial giving?

**Read Luke 12:13-21**

- (8) What does the parable of the rich fool tell us about our attitude towards money and possessions?
- (9) How can our attitude towards our money be different from that of the rich fool?

**Read Matthew 23:23-24 and Luke 21:1-4**

- (10) For what does Jesus condemn the Pharisees?
- (11) For what is the widow commended?
- (12) What do both of these tell us about our attitude to how much we give?

**Read our key verse, Proverbs 3:9**

- (13) The emphasis here is on giving God the first fruits. Why do you think this is?
- (14) What are our 'first fruits'?
- (15) What does it mean to honour God with our wealth? How might this be counter-cultural?
- (16) What are the implications for our giving here at Christ Church?

**Prayer:** Spend some time in prayer for our exploration of the subject of money and giving over the next few weeks, and for your response.

## (2) Giving as stewardship

**Aim:** To look at how the giving of money can be part of the stewardship of the world's resources that God has placed in our hands, and the implications for this in terms of our responsibility.

**Key verse:** *Be careful to follow all the commands of the Lord your God, that you may possess the good land and pass it on as an inheritance to your descendents for ever.* 1 Chronicles 28:8b

**Worship:** Read **Genesis 1:1-3, 26-30** and then spend some time praising God for the fact that he is our creator, and for all that he has made.

**Word:** Read **Genesis 1:28-30**

- (1) What has God placed human beings in the world to do?
- (2) What has God given us and for what purposes?
- (3) What sorts of things should we have in mind when we think about caring for God's world?

**Read 1 Chronicles 28:1-8**

This is taken from David's charge to his people and to his son Solomon, whom he knew would be responsible for building the temple. Sadler defines stewardship as 'willingness to be accountable for some larger body than ourselves, such as an organisation or a community'.

- (4) How do we view our relationship to Christ Church?
- (5) Do we ever view our relationship as one where we are accountable to God for our church family?
- (6) What does it mean to be a steward of God's church as well as his world?
- (7) What practical steps can we take to make sure our giving to our church family is responsible? (Consider planning your giving, using Gift Aid, committing to giving for a specific length of time, praying about it.)
- (8) What are the benefits to Christ Church and to ourselves of this responsible giving?
- (9) What questions can we think of about finance at Christ Church? Please send any questions or thoughts to Susie Sanders or Mark Wallace.

**Prayer:** Spend some time in prayer, reflecting on the key verse and the giving prayer.

**(3) Giving gladly**

**Aim:** To remind ourselves of what it means to give joyfully to God as part of our worship.

**Key verse:** *Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours...everything comes from you and we have given you only what comes from your hand.* 1 Chronicles 29:11,14

**Worship:** Use the key verse as a prayer, and praise God for his gifts to his people and to us specifically.

**Word:** Read **Job 42:1-6** and **Philippians 4:10-20**

This prayer comes at the end of the book of Job, the Bible's longest treatise on suffering.

- (1) What is Job's conclusion about everything he has gone through?
- (2) What does Paul say about seeking contentment?
- (3) How does this affect the way we think about suffering in our own lives? Think specifically about those facing financial hardship, debt or joblessness.

**Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-20**

This section of 1 Chronicles is often used in church when we thank God for the offering taken. David has collected together the gifts from the people for the building of the temple and he rejoices in what God has given him, as he offers God the gifts of the people.

- (4) What is the relationship between giving and worship? Are they two different things or are they connected?
- (5) Is giving one of the ways we use to express our worship of God here at Christ Church?
- (6) Can you think of ways in which giving and worship could be more closely linked?
- (7) Is it possible to link giving and worship if we do not have much money or are in debt? (You may want to revisit the story of the widow's mite in **Luke 21:1-4**.)
- (8) Many of us like to know exactly how our money is going to be used before we give it. Is this simply being responsible and careful with God's resources, or does it limit the degree to which we can simply give joyfully?
- (9) How much should we seek to influence and control how our money is used by our church family?
- (10) How do we feel about being part of the wider Church of England? Does this passage help us to think about what our attitude should be?

**Prayer:** Pray for our leadership team, PCC, Bishops and Guildford Diocese.

**(4) Gaining from giving**

**Aim:** To appreciate how giving can be a blessing to us and how giving helps us to be built up as disciples of Jesus.

**Key verse:** *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* Acts 20:35

**Worship:** Take time to be still together before God, and be aware of his presence.

**Word: Read Acts 20:35**

(1) This verse is often quoted rather ironically, when we find we are giving out more than we are getting. Is it trite or does giving money away bring blessing? What might such a blessing be?

**Read Matthew 19:16-26**

- (2) What is Jesus' warning about wealth here?
- (3) In what ways can riches prevent us from living a godly life?

**Read Luke 12:13-21**

- (4) What does it mean to be 'rich towards God'?
- (5) What does our contemporary culture tell us about the value of an abundance of possessions?
- (6) How does Jesus' teaching challenge our culture's values regarding wealth?
- (7) Does 'holding on to things of this world lightly' make us salt and light among our friends and community? If not, could it?
- (8) Would we be living more counter-culturally if we really took on board Jesus' teaching?
- (9) As a church family we give away ten per cent of our income to individuals and organisations local and worldwide in the mission field. What direct experience is there in your homegroup of any of these?
- (10) How could you build links to our mission partners?

**Prayer:** Spend some time praying individually for your own attitude towards wealth, and then pray together for mission partners either at Christ Church or known to you.

**(5) Getting going with giving**

**Aim:** To allow for any gaps in our understanding in the area of giving to be discussed, and to consider individually what type of giver we may be or would like to be.

**Key verse:** *Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!* Romans 11:35-36

**Worship:** Use the key verse and thank God for all he has given us and all he is to us, even in hard times.

**Word: Read Romans 11:33-36**

- (1) What does this passage tell us about God?
- (2) What does Paul praise God for?
- (3) If everything comes from God, how does that affect how we give?
- (4) John Wesley's view was that you should 'Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can.' What do you think of this?
- (5) What things hinder us from giving more?

**Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4**

- (6) How does Paul want the Corinthian church to organise its giving? (The gift was for a specific purpose: to help churches in a time of famine.)
- (7) Why is this?

*It would be very helpful if leaders could take some notes to feed back on the next few questions.*

- (8) Following the sermon series, the information given out in church and these homegroup sessions, what are the gaps in our understanding of what we are giving to and how the money we give is used?
- (9) Following the homegroup studies and what we know generally from the Bible about giving, what are the gaps in our understanding about why we are giving?
- (10) Do you know enough about the practicalities of how to give to Christ Church?

**Prayer:** Spend some time in personal reflection on the type of giver you are and might be in the future. You may want to write a few notes for further reflection on your own or with a prayer partner.

Pray for all our work at Christ Church, that we will love Christ and make him known in every part of our life together and individually.

Pray for our current Hub project, that we will release the money we need to realise God's vision of his work for this generation at Christ Church.

## Appendix

### (1) Further resources

#### Websites

**Church of England Stewardship** – a good general guide to CofE thought about stewardship <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/funding/stewardship.html>

**Credit Action** – a Christian organisation concerned with debt and broader issues around money management – an excellent starting point for those struggling on this issue <http://www.creditaction.org.uk>

### (2) Giving prayer

It would be good for groups to use this together, either at the beginning or the end of each session.

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour and the majesty; everything in heaven and on earth is yours. From you and through you and to you are all things. To you be the glory forever. Lord, you are good and your love endures for ever. All things come from you, give us grateful hearts to give back to you what is your own. Amen.

Based on I Chronicles 29 and Romans 11

**(3) 'First fruits' prayer**

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,  
we your unworthy servants  
give you most humble and hearty thanks  
for all your goodness and loving kindness.  
We bless you for our creation, preservation,  
and all the blessings of this life;  
but above all for your immeasurable love  
in the redemption of the world  
by our Lord Jesus Christ,  
for the means of grace and for the hope of glory.  
And give us, we pray,  
such a sense of all your mercies  
that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful,  
and that we show forth your praise,  
not only with our lips but with our lives,  
by giving ourselves to your service,  
and by walking before you  
in holiness and righteousness, all our days.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be honour and glory,  
for ever and ever.

Amen.

**(4) Steps in giving****1 Survival**

*I give a bit when I'm asked because the church ought to be there in case I need it.*

The need is survival and there's a chance that the church might help. The relationship with the church is that I know it's there if I need it – all being well, I won't!

**2 Supermarket**

*I'm happy to pay towards the cost of the bits of the church that I want and enjoy.*

The need is safety and by engaging with the church on my terms I feel safe and unchallenged. I see myself as a customer.

**3 Support**

*The work of the church is important and so I'll support it.*

I belong to the church; I see myself as a supporter of the church.

**4 Subscription**

*I see myself as a member and I wish to contribute my fair share of the costs.*

Church is part of my identity. I am recognised as a member and I play my part.

**5 Submission**

*My understanding of being a disciple is that I should put God first in my life.*

I see a deeper meaning in life and my giving responds to God and not just to the needs of the church.

**6 Sacrifice**

*My Christian calling is to be like Christ, so I give joyfully and sacrificially, following Christ.*

**Summary:**

**Survival** – I give a bit when I'm asked.

**Supermarket** – I pay for the bits I enjoy.

**Support** – Church is important, so I support it.

**Subscription** – I'm a member, so I pay my dues.

**Submission** – I'm a disciple, with all that that involves.

**Sacrifice** – I'm called to be Christ-like and act accordingly.