

In daily life - towards imitation

Here's a story or testimony to flesh this out... The response to the appeal for someone who is not part of St Mark's, but has been facing a critical debt situation, leading to possible eviction, was overwhelming. Over three times more than was needed was given or pledged. As a result we are able to look at setting up a hardship fund, which will be carefully administered and available for you to apply to, for yourself, or for someone else. The PCC will be talking about it this month. Such a spontaneous and generous-hearted reaction to a person in need is truly a sign of God's grace and love. Thank you.

STUDY QUESTIONS – EXPLORING THE INFORMATION (ABOUT 30 MINUTES)

1. Luke 7: 36-50. Read this out slowly, imagining yourself to be the woman. What are you thinking? Feeling? Learning?
2. 2 Corinthians 8: 1-15. What would you say to encourage people to live generously and freely?
3. Luke 19: 1-10. In what ways are giving and salvation linked?

Living it out

How free are you when it comes to money?

Prayer suggestion:

Use Teresa of Avila's prayer on the reading for Wednesday as a stimulus to pray for yourself, and others in your group. Use the prayer diary in the new bulletin for October to pray for the church community.

Joining a group and other resources:

We encourage everyone to join a group if possible. We have daytime or evening groups and youth cells. If you would like to know more, please visit our website, or contact Guy on 01423 504160.

There are many great resources to help you pray and enjoy the Scriptures on a daily basis.

www.pray-as-you-go.org A 12 minute guided prayer and meditation to listen to.

<https://www.wordlive.org> Many excellent daily reading approaches, available as an app.

<http://www.sacredspace.ie/> A short guided prayer and meditation to read.

Or download the app from Soul Survivor, with short daily videos: <http://bible.soulsurvivor.com/>

INSPIRE

STMARK'S 2014 STEWARDSHIP

Everywhere...in everything

Week beginning: 12th October 2014.

Weekly discipleship and spiritual growth resources for all ages, groups and individuals. Follow up material on Sunday's teaching for groups and individuals.

GROWING AT HOME

Three suggested discipleship activities suitable for all ages to help you grow, based on up - to God; In - to each other; Out - to mission

Up

Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also". Together or on your own make a thanksgiving list beginning of each letter of the word TREASURE. e.g. T = Trees R = Roast dinner etc. Give thanks together to God.

In

How can you encourage the people you have a connection with in the St Mark's community this week? It might be at Toddlers, or Open church, or at a Sunday group, or a housegroup.

Out

What can you share with someone this week. A toy? Some money? A cup of tea? Your time?

DAILY READINGS AND PRAYERS.

These daily readings are the same as the ones used in church every morning from 9 - 9.30. Feel free to join us, or use them at home. Read one or both of the readings asking yourself, "What is God saying to me, personally?" and, "How can I respond today?" If you are pressed for time there is a focus verse from the passages. Try reading the verse slowly, three or four times, allowing God to shape your heart and mind through His word. You can use these together with our daily prayer diary from the monthly newsheet.

Monday 13th October

Readings: Psalm 71, Acts 21:37-22:21. Focus verse: 14 'Then he said: "The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. 15 You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name."

Tuesday 14th October

Readings: Psalm 73, Acts 22:22-23:11. Focus verse: 11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, 'Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.'

Wednesday 15th October. Teresa of Avila.

Readings: Psalm 77, Acts 23: 12-end. "Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things are passing away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices." Teresa.

Thursday 16th October

Readings: Psalm 78:1-39, Acts 24: 1-23. Focus verse: I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, 15 and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. 16 So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

Friday 17th October. Ignatius of Antioch.

Readings: Psalm 55, Acts 24:24-25:12. "I would rather die and come to Jesus Christ than be king over the entire earth. Him I seek who died for us; Him I love who rose again because of us." Ignatius.

Saturday 18th October

Readings: Psalm 145, Luke 1:1-4. Focus verse: Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye witnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

SUNDAY'S TEACHING: RESOURCES FOR GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS.

First thoughts:

Have you been to the stewardship presentation? What were the main things that struck you? Apart from the food...☺ If you missed it, you can watch it at: <https://vimeo.com/108224414>

This week's teaching in a nutshell:

Self sacrificial giving. 2 Corinthians 9: 6-7. Mark 12: 41-44.

We are not setting rules. 5% realistic amount and would mean we could move forward, but it's not a biblical figure....what Jesus is after is hearts that are free to live generously and sacrificially. Paul said, "I'm not commanding you. Decide in your heart." Not reluctantly. Whatever your response to the stewardship campaign, don't do it from duty or anger, or because you feel forced. If it's not an expression of love, for God and his people, don't do it.

Guy told the story of a man who offered a woman a golden nugget....That night she could not sleep, tossing and turning in her bed. At dawn she set off to find the tramp, who was sleeping under a tree in the park. She woke him and said, 'Give me that wealth that makes it possible for you to give this treasure away.'

Jesus said, "It's better to give than to receive." And even if you don't believe He is Lord, human beings are fulfilled by giving ourselves away. Someone said, "We don't think we can live generously because we have never tried. But the sooner we start the better, for we are going to have to give up our lives finally, and the longer we wait the less time we have for the soaring and swooping life of grace."

So what turns us into generous, hilarious givers? In short, it's about knowing what we have received. The woman who poured perfume over Jesus' feet loved much, because she knew how much she was loved.

So what have you received from God? You have received life. Breath. Food. A home. People around you. Clothes. A world to enjoy. God can not love you any more, and He could not love you any less. You have been forgiven. Not because of something you have done, but because of something he has done. "...though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. He rose again for you. One day you will be raised and all mourning, crying, pain, suffering death will be wiped away. God has given you Himself, living in you. His living presence, His Holy Spirit. He has breathed himself into your frail flesh, to change your heart to be like His.

May this journey, this discipline free you to live this soaring, swooping life of grace and may we thrill to this journey together as we trust Him more and more.