

Home Group notes for the week following Sunday 4 August 2013

THEME: STEWARDSHIP (tithing)

As we Gather

The readings this week reveal the depth / superficiality of our relationship with God / Christ

Reading Scripture MARK 10 : 17 – 22 and MALACHI 3 : 6 – 10

Thinking together

Mark's vivid description of how the young man approached Jesus endears the reader to him. Jesus' response seems rather like a dash of cold water – 'Why do you call me good?...'; 'You know the commandments...'

Often our initial response to the Good News of Jesus is entirely emotional, and very often based on the personality / charisma of the narrator of the good news – preacher, teacher, or evangelist.

Why do you think Jesus tried to lower the emotional level of the meeting? Discuss

Why do you think Jesus pointed the young man to God? Discuss

Jesus wasn't offended by the young man's pride in having kept the commandments. In fact he loved him for his goodness. However, Jesus knew that the man did not fully understand the implications (cost) of his (Jesus') lifestyle, so he challenged the young man, thereby exposing the barrier lying between him and God.

Why do you think money and pride in accomplishment can actually cause Christians to break the first two Commandments? Discuss

Christ was exercising 'tough love' when he challenged the young man to sell everything and give it all away. He could equally well ask us 'How much do you want real Christianity?'

Have you considered, and are you prepared for, the cost of being a Christ-follower? Discuss

The Lord's patience with humanity is endless and no matter how far we stray from his way he is always prepared to forgive us and restore our relationship with him (Malachi 3:6-10).

Everything we have is from God – even the demanding job and the hard work which makes it so rewarding, both emotionally and materially, and yet we find it so difficult to share our good fortune (our blessings).

What does money mean to you? Discuss

When last were you positively and sacrificially generous? Discuss

God has promised that what we do for others, we do for him (Matthew 25:35-40), and we will never be less than blessed (Malachi 3:10 & Matthew 25:34).

How much of all that God gives to you are you prepared to give towards the advancement of His Kingdom? Discuss

How does your local church use the monies it receives? Discuss

How much of the church's total income is used for

- **maintaining church programmes, buildings and staff? Discuss**
- **advancing God's kingdom? Discuss**

In Closing

As products of our culture we easily become addicted to comfort. Consequently we end up as good and respectable people - no big betrayals but no big self-sacrifices either; not only unable to give up our lives for our friends but unable to give up even our comfort.

Love does not avoid the truth, and because Jesus loves us enough to have died for us, he gives us life-changing challenges.

Where and how are you going to find meaning in your life this week? Discuss