

GROUP LEADERS NOTES – STUDY 14

Question 1

- a) Jesus is teaching against the external piety which was prominent; particularly with the Pharisees.
- b) The issue is whether we are seeking to please man; or to please God.
- c) The Pharisees helped the needy in order to look good but also to gain favour with God.
- d) When human approval is sought then that is its own reward. But no amount of giving can gain salvation (**Eph 2:8-9**).

Question 2

- a) The Greek word translated 'hypocrite' originally meant 'an actor who wears a mask'.
- b) Such people had talked themselves into believing that their actions have the interests of the needy at heart. The appreciation of those they help only serve to feed the delusion.
- c) In the end they are fulfilling their own need for reputation and recognition, rather than the good of the recipient of their help.
- d) They get what they are after; but that is all!

Question 3

- a) Notice that Jesus says “*when you give to the needy*”. The Bible teaches the principle of almsgiving; e.g. **Deut 15:11; Psalm 41:1; Prov 19:17**.
- b) The issue here not about ‘whether’ but ‘how’. This is about motive!
- c) It can be hard to help others quietly when others around us make a lot of noise about their good works.
- d) The natural thing is to want others to think well of us.
- e) We can feel that people are maybe thinking that we are not doing anything. (This has happened when people criticise rich people of being selfish. The problem is that we do not know what they do with their money in secret).

It is important to point out that not all giving has to be done anonymously. Barnabas is a good example in Acts 4:34-37 when everyone knew he had sold a field and given the proceeds to the Lord’s work. Remember that the main point in our passage is to do with motive!

Question 4

- a) What Jesus says here is not intended to give us credit. That could then easily develop into pride.
- b) The idea is to ensure that our giving is not prompted by what we can gain from it; or by a desire for the praise of others.
- c) The idea of one hand not knowing what the other is doing emphasises the secrecy of it.

Encourage the group to suggest ways we can give secretly: e.g. anonymous gift through the letter box; a low key invitation for a meal; not telling other people what you have done. (Sometimes others do need to know; e.g. the church treasurer or the recipient of help. The motive is the test!)

Question 5

- a) It is important to see that giving secretly is done to avoid the recognition and honour of men.
- b) That sort of giving pleases God.
- c) We may not get the recognition we think we deserve; indeed we might be seen as lacking compassion because such acts are not seen.
- d) We will, however, know the blessing of living a righteous life here and the ‘well done good and faithful servant’ when we get to glory.

Question 6

Try and get your group members to summarise the message of this passage. An exercise like this ensures that the passage has been understood. E.g. *A true act of righteousness seeks not to gain praise from man but to please God. He sees what we do and the motive behind it when we seek to glorify Him.*