



A SIX WEEK LENTEN STUDY

(Based on "Holy Habits: Gladness and Generosity")

When we think about Lent, our minds go to giving up things as a reminder of what Jesus was willing to give up for us. Sometimes, people think of it as a penance. This study shows how we can have a generosity of spirit and joy in giving.

Each week one of the four contributors to this series shares a reflection based on the scripture reading. The *Holy Habits* is a way of life to be lived by the disciples of Jesus, both individually and collectively. They ask that we keep our hearts and minds open to the Holy Spirit and be alert to the wonders of God's grace and the signs of God's love that emerge as we live this down-to-earth, holy way of life that Luke (Acts 2:42-47), invites us to imitate.

WEEK ONE: FREELY YOU HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE

Reading: Deuteronomy 15:7-10

Reflection: Moses wrestled with the challenge: to ensure messages of crucial significance would be understood. Deuteronomy was his answer. It is powerful, persuasive instruction on how to live intentionally as God's people in response to his love and mercy.

A masterclass in communication – nobody could hear this and not be utterly convinced of the absolute necessity of cultivating a habit of extreme generosity. The passage begins and ends with positive and unequivocal instructions to foster practices of liberal lending and generous giving. In between is a warning about the peril of ignoring his urging.

Moses hammers home the importance of gladness and generosity, piling one adverb on to another to emphasise the attitude the Lord longs to see: FREELY lend; GENEROUSLY give. The meanness of a heart of stone and tightly clenched fist is contrasted with the compassionate humanity of an open hand offered to those in need.

O Lord, our provider, all we are and all we have come from you. Grant us the love and courage to live a life of big-heartedness and open-handedness. Amen

QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to be poor or needy?
2. What kind of situations tempt you to be hard-hearted or tight-fisted?
3. Have you experienced the blessing of being open-handed and/or have you had experiences that did not seem to go well?
4. How can we foster a culture of generosity in our church?
5. Are there guidelines or principles related to being open-handed or to freely lending that you have found helpful?
6. What might 21st century equivalents of *'Be careful not to harbour this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near"'*?

SUGGESTION:

How might we donate time to enhance the well-being of our community in ways that will not necessarily benefit us? Following the teaching of Jesus, whatever each decides to do, do it quietly and unobtrusively (Matthew 6:1-4). Take time to reflect on what you learned from this and how it might change your behaviour in the future.

IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

1. What is the relationship between gladness and generosity?
2. How do you experience God's generosity and how do you respond to that?

Make a note of your thoughts as some might like to share these at the beginning of our next session.

