



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.

WEEK FIVE: GENEROSITY SPREADING BLESSINGS, and SHAKEN AND STIRRED

Reading: Luke 19:5-9 and Acts 16:24-34

Reflection: There are some wonderful examples in the Gospels of a generous and forgiving spirit. One of these is the father of the prodigal who ran out with arms wide open to welcome and forgive his son. Another is Zacchaeus, a tax collector. They were hated by the Jews because they collected taxes for the Romans and always added on a healthy bit for themselves. When Jesus called him to come down from the tree where he was watching, because he wanted to go to his house to eat with him. The result was that on receiving God's love, Zacchaeus declared he would give half of his goods to the poor and restore, four times over, what he had wrongly taken. In that short space of time, he went from being a greedy, self-seeking man to one who was gladly generous because of the blessing he had received. This is what Jesus can do. In the Acts account, we see a man who was both shaken and stirred. The jailer was so agitated at the thought of having lost his prisoners following the earthquake that he saw suicide as his only option. However, Paul, the one who had been jailed offers real hope, real salvation, to the jailer. This act of generosity on the part of Paul leads to new life not only for the oppressor, but also for his family. How might our world be changed if we remembered to see *all* of God's family as just that... God's family. How might the 'chains' of addiction, abuse, heartache, loneliness, and hopelessness be broken if we but offer a word of grace, believing that that word has the power to change any one and anything? The glad sharing of the good news resulted in a stirring transformation in the jailer, evidenced in his generous offering of medical treatment and food. But much more than that, Paul and Silas's sharing leads to a

glad response by the jailer and his entire household. Their generous spirits, despite their physical circumstances, lead to a transformation no one could have foreseen.

What steps will you take to express to others God's amazing love for you?
Are we able to say: Lord, shake and stir me to be an agent of your salvation?

QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus' words got to Zacchaeus' heart. Have you experienced such words personally? How can we learn to speak as Jesus did?
2. Can you think of instances where prejudice makes it hard for people to be generous?
3. Discuss the impact on your community if your church announced that it would give half of all its assets to the poor. What might prevent you from being glad and generous in this way?
4. How can this group encourage each other to experience again the freeing love of Jesus? How can that love release you personally and as a community?
5. Have you ever felt like you were about to lose everything? What did you do?
6. How, if ever, has your family been impacted by the Holy Spirit moving in you?
7. What might happen in your community (faith, family, neighbourhood) if you allowed the Holy Spirit to shake you up?
8. How might your answers to the previous questions affect your attitude to gladness and generosity?

IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

1. How might the lives of those in your community be positively affected if our words, actions, and attitudes displayed a gladness in your giving?
2. Reflect on the hymns and worship songs you sing and the promises regarding generosity that you make in singing them. Are there any promises that need to be lived out more fully?

