

## Study Guide

**Monday, September 6.** Read Luke 12:33-34.

Jesus' words here are not difficult to understand. They are just difficult to *do*! Jesus wants us to *care for the needy*, a theme that is found in over 300 verses in the Bible. Not only is this theme found in large number throughout scripture, it is also difficult to find a verse with excuses, such as "once a year," or "unless you're busy elsewhere." Wouldn't you agree that Jesus' message is very clear and direct to us? If this theme is so important to Jesus, we should probably be asking ourselves whether we measure-up to Jesus' standards. Re-read this passage today as if Jesus was speaking directly to you, and apply his words to your checkbook, business practices, and daily interactions. Challenging, isn't it!

**Tuesday, September 7.** Read 2 Corinthians 9:7.

During our recent Mission Blitz week, church members frequently said that serving the needy gave *them* a greater blessing than those they served. It seems that there is something inside us that deeply resonates with giving ourselves away for the benefit of others. Maybe you, too, remember experiencing this feeling of giving cheerfully and feeling blessed. If you have, which of the following qualities would you say blessed you the most...joy, maturity, wisdom, peace, or greater connection to God? Giving cheerfully not only helps the needy and blesses us in the process, but as this verse points-out, it is also an experience that Paul says "God loves." Ask God today to break your heart more and more for the things that break God's heart.

**Wednesday, September 8.** Read Acts 4:32-35.

Read this description of the early church in Acts, and now apply it to your church. See any differences? It is baffling how the early church's vision of giving to the poor morphed into the church of today. Today, we more commonly hear of people who "shop" for a church in order to be "fed." Pastors, in response, feel a great pressure to provide a weekly product for picky consumers. Do you agree that churches shy away from issues of poverty and are more inclined towards a consumer-driven model? If you were a pastor for one day, how would you move your church into the model of Acts 4:32-35?

**Thursday, September 9.** Read Isaiah 58:10-11.

Do you find it interesting that Isaiah suggests helping the needy and oppressed as a way to get out of your own darkness? When you feel stuck, or in a 'desert place,' or confused about the future, Isaiah suggests finding an opportunity to give yourself away to others. There are many hungry, and needy, and oppressed all around. God is calling you to one of these opportunities. Do you know which one? Frederick Beuchner, a famous preacher, said, "The place where God calls you is the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep hunger." Do you know where the world's hunger and your gladness intersect?

**Friday, September 10.** Read Jeremiah 5:27-29.

The prophet Jeremiah shared these strong words with the wealthy and powerful. Wealth and power were not the evils mentioned. The evils mentioned were *misuse* of wealth and power. Jeremiah inferred that an increase of wealth and power required an increase in *responsibility* towards the fatherless and the poor. The way you spend your money is how you use your wealth. The way you vote, the policies you endorse in your business, and your choice to speak-up for those who cannot is your power. Compared to the fatherless and poor, you are likely very wealthy and powerful, whether you know it or not. Pray a specific prayer today for those in our community who are fatherless and poor, and pray that the church will be the first to "plead their case" and "defend their rights."