

SMALL GROUPS

LIFE IS BETTER TOGETHER

“How To Change Lives”

ICEBREAKER |

What was your favorite present you ever gave someone else?

INTRODUCTION |

It's the most wonderful time of the year...to give! All year long we look forward to Christmas. The treats, the decorations, time with family (that we may have to do over video this year), and finally the gifts. Some of us are still kids at heart, meaning we can't wait to find out what we get from a friend or family member. But as we grow, we definitely know it's better to give than to receive. What will we give this year?

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When you think of the Christmas story in the Bible, you automatically think of baby Jesus, and rightly so! But there was another baby born around that time who would grow up to be John the Baptist. He made the way for Jesus and he preached a very specific message.

John replied, “If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry.”

Luke 3:11 (NLT)

Did you know that there are 560 verses in the Bible about our responsibility to help the poor? In fact, Jesus talked more about poverty and wealth than almost any other subject, including prayer. But let's be honest, it's not a subject we like to think about very often.

What are some reasons that we ignore the problem of poverty, both here close to home and around the world? (Example, afraid it could happen to us, ashamed I haven't done enough)

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What is God's solution for helping the poor? It's us! Let's look at one particular passage of scripture in the Old Testament where God taught His people to help those who couldn't help themselves.

When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

Deuteronomy 24:19 (NIV)

Most of us, unless you are between jobs, have a job – a field where we make money. Maybe you work in the real estate field or the legal field, the food delivery field or the cleaning field. That field is where God has provided for your needs. And if you're retired or a stay at home mom, you have other sources of income, maybe social security, retirement plan, a side business – whatever.

God says, when you are in your field leave some of it behind for the **foreigner** (people who don't live in **America**), the **fatherless (orphans** who are fatherless because their **father died or abandoned them**) and the **widow** (who back then were left **penniless**). When we help those who can't help themselves, God says then He will help us by blessing us.

Was there ever a time that you needed help? Maybe it was a financial struggle or perhaps just a job you couldn't do on your own. What was your emotional state at the time? Was it easy or hard to ask for help? If you got help, how relieved were you?

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Then God gives another example to emphasize His point.

When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.

Deuteronomy 24:20 (NIV)

Olives would be our income. Again, He says to leave some of it behind. We might be tempted to think this means “leftovers,” those things we have no use for. Instead, these are the extras that John the Baptist talked about. All of us have some extra, even if we don't feel like it – something that we have more of than another person. It's not just money, though – it could be a special talent, a spiritual gift, or even the use of our time.

Other than money, what is something you can give to someone else in need?

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Then God gives us one more visual.

When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.

Deuteronomy 24:21 (NIV)

It's clear that God is intentional about this message because He keeps repeating it. "Do not go over again..." either your fields, your olives, your grapes – whatever! Don't keep it all for yourself.

God has blessed us to be a blessing, but going over can ruin that for us. If we keep going over budget, we don't have any to help others. If we are concerned about our bank accounts running over, we're just holding onto it rather than letting it go.

Finally, God gives us one more motivation to help the poor.

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.

Deuteronomy 24:22 (NIV)

Christmas is a great time to remember. We can remember the years past when things were great! We can remember those who gave us a present or the look on their eyes when they opened ours. But we also need to remember God's blessings in our lives.

What is one way God has blessed you in the past? How might that give you a hint as to how He wants you to be a blessing?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, Pastor Dave gave us several ways that New Hope is helping the poor near and far from us. From the Food Bank to the HOPE CENTER KAILUA; from the Saguaro Correctional Facility to Ho'ola Na Pua. There are so many places to give towards, and places to give as well!

Remember, giving is not just about opening your wallet, it's about opening your heart. Find a way to give this year – whether from your treasure, out of your God-given talent, or by spending time with someone who needs help.

For more information about these and other partnerships, go to our New Hope Windward website and click GIVE.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1: *After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with His mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

Matthew 2:9-11 (NLT)

Day 2: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for He has anointed Me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.”*

Luke 4:18-19 (NLT)

Day 3: *He saves the needy from the sword in their mouth; He saves them from the clutches of the powerful. So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth.*

Job 5:15-16 (NIV)

Day 4: *Sell what you have and give the money to the poor. Make yourselves moneybags that never wear out. Make sure your treasure is safe in heaven, where thieves cannot steal it and moths cannot destroy it. Your heart will always be where your treasure is.*

Luke 12:33-34 (CEV)

Day 5: *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

1 Timothy 6:18 (NIV)