



## **HOPE Church Fall 2020 Life Groups – Sunday, 10/11/2020 sermon notes**

*This week's sermon celebrated some of the many blessings that Hope Church has received and continues to provide to the congregation as well as the community – both locally and abroad. Being in Christian community requires a commitment to sacrificial love, the kind of love that Jesus calls us to embrace and share. Embracing community means considering the needs of others and involves steadfast prayer as well as selfless acts of goodwill.*

**Mark 12:41-44** - 41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 43 And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

**Colossians 4:2-6** - 2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Pastor Keith reminded us that even despite the obstacles and challenges brought about by the events of the past several months, there have been amazing examples of Christian community at Hope Church. Even so, the fight continues and we must remain steadfast in our efforts to be salt and light in a hurting world. Keith encouraged us to recognize that, "*We are called to make a difference – we are called to be change makers... [and] to lead people to Jesus.*" To do so requires embracing a sacrificial love for others. This *sacrifice* – hearing God's call and making an active choice to be of service to others in need – is the foundation upon which Christian community is established. And, as believers, we are grateful for our opportunities to serve the church and help others in need. Nevertheless, in difficult times (like what we are experiencing now) we can be distracted by the noise of critical voices and negative events. We know that our God has not given us a spirit of fear! So now – more than ever – we must remain steadfast in prayer and walk graciously showing love towards others and speaking with God's wisdom in our hearts. As Keith put it, "*That's what community is all about – to seek to come together to evoke each other to grow [stronger] in Christ.*" Are you willing to be all that our God is calling you to become – to love, to serve and to enable Christian community wherever God calls you to be?

### **Sermon points for discussion:**

The sermon referenced two sets of NT scripture that connect sacrificial giving with mindfulness in prayer, thanksgiving and reaching out to others in need. It builds upon last week's sermon points and seeks to challenge what we each individually perceive as living out lives in Christian community. Here are some questions to guide and inspire your personal meditation and group discussion on this important topic:

- Point 1 (Mark 12:41-44): *Christian community requires living out sacrificial love which can involve giving more than what we may perceive to be adequate for a given need.*
  1. We all have needs that require us to balance our personal resources (e.g. time, money...) and the issues we face in life can place demanding challenges on these resources.
    - a. What do you perceive as *your* important resources that you have at your disposal?



***HOPE Church Fall 2020 Life Groups – Sunday, 10/11/2020 sermon notes***

- b. How do you perceive these resources? For example, are they a byproduct of your own good efforts? A gift of provision from God? Asked another way – are you an “owner” or a “manager” of your resources?
  - i. How does your answer shape your perception of how best to use these resources?
- c. Are there challenges that are causing you to feel protective of the personal resources you have identified?
  - i. How do you think these challenges effect how you give of these resources to others?
  - ii. What is it about these challenges that are causing you to hold back from giving more freely of your treasure (i.e. your energy, your time, your money...)?
- d. Do you feel like you may need help to overcome whatever is holding you back from giving sacrificially? If yes, ask your group to pray for you to find the courage to give of the resources that God has provisioned you with for His Kingdom.

*Hint – If you were part of a Rooted Group, go back and look at the readings in week 8 for additional perspective.*

- Point 2 (Colossians 4:2-6): *Living out a life of Christian community requires a continuous commitment to thoughtful prayer for others, a spirit of thanksgiving and a disciplined mindset to be gracious towards all we encounter using every opportunity to speak in a meaningful way about Christ.*
- 2. Our day-to-day activities are constantly making demands upon our personal resources. This demands that we balance our resources with a mindful attitude towards the principles of Christian community
  - a. Thinking about the attributes listed in point 2 above, (i.e. prayer, thankfulness, being gracious, etc) are any of these qualities challenging for you? What can you do, each day, to grow stronger in living out these values?

***Going deeper...***

- 3. Pastor Keith encouraged us to pray for others. Group prayer is always encouraged and remains a powerful weapon against the forces of darkness that are working to destroy our Christian community.
  - a. Before your group meeting, take a little time to write out a prayer for someone else. Make it heartfelt, be specific and nothing more than a couple minutes. Need some topical inspiration? Go to: <https://www.hopecclb.org/prayer-focus-guide>
  - b. Partner up with one other person in your group and make a commitment to reach out to them midweek (e.g. a call, an e-mail, a text) with a word of encouragement or a verse of scripture based upon what they shared in group. We all need encouragement and prayers from our brothers and sisters in Christ!



## ***HOPE Church Fall 2020 Life Groups – Sunday, 10/11/2020 sermon notes***

- c. Some additional inspiration on life-group prayer is provided for your consideration at the end of this guide. Look at the other versus of scripture provided below. How do you perceive them as applying to your own walk in community with others? Is there a verse that God brought to your mind that is not listed below? *If time permits, share it with your group* 😊

### Other verses of Scripture to consider:

**Philippians 4:13** – I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

**Luke 12:15** – And [Jesus] said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

**Philippians 4:19** – And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

**Matthew 25:19-21** – 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ 21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

**Romans 13:8** – Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law

**2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:7** – for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control

**Proverbs 23:4-5** – 4 Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. 5 When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven

**1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:15** – but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect

**James 1:22** - But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves

**Ephesians 6:12** - For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

- *All Scripture taken from the ESV*

### Life Group Prayer (by Jasmyn Stamper)

Prayer is our first line of offense. Why do we treat it like our last line of defense? We often wait until we’re in the thick of it, in the middle of a storm, or hanging on by a thread before we pray. We also tend to pray more for help with hurts than we pray to give thanks for victories. But prayer is powerful, and it’s especially powerful when we pray together. Why is praying together so powerful and important?

- You’re inviting God and the Holy Spirit into the space. The book of Matthew literally tells us that where more than two people gather in Jesus’ name, He is with us. (Matthew 18:20, Acts 4:31)
- You’re getting closer and uniting as a group. You’re not supposed to carry burdens alone, and who doesn’t want to share their good news? Also, going back to Matthew 18, Jesus reminds us that when we come into agreement and pray together, anything we believe in and for is possible. (Matthew 18:18-19)
- You’re seeking God together. A great part of doing life together is getting closer to God together, and you all can do that through prayer. (James 5:13-16)
- You’re helping the group dynamics. After you pray together, conversations and later meetings may flow a little easier. You now have some talking points and conversation starters for when you see someone next.

In your Life Group, you can start treating prayer like an offensive play. You can pray, ask for God’s help, and thank Him for all He’s done together—as a Life Group!