

Small Group Study Guide

③ Our Response to Others in Tough Times

10/4 - 10/10

SURVIVING TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES



BEGIN IN PRAYER

OPEN

From the Clio Messenger: *Clio-area pastor, Phil Owen, points to power of prayer in tough economic times*
By Jared Field, February 13, 2009

VIENNA TOWNSHIP, Michigan -- It's an adage that proceeds from the pulpit and into the streets: Christians are like tea bags, you don't really know what they're made of until they're in hot water.

Pastor Phil Owen of New Covenant Free Methodist Church in Vienna Township, is pointing his congregation to the power of prayer and partnership in these rough economic times. New Covenant will be doing a brand new worship experience, called "Kneeds." It will be different than a normal worship service," said Owen. "We're going to be doing some extended time of worship through music, and some serious time of prayer. We're going to be praying specifically for people in our local area, struggling with job loss, hopelessness and poverty, both financial and emotional."

In addition, New Covenant will be joined by several of its ministry partners as well as various social service organizations in the area. For Owen, reaching out is what the church is supposed to be all about. "I think Christians need to be involved," said Owen, whose congregation will provide space for local ministries to talk about the services and opportunities they offer. "We have a responsibility to be involved in people's lives. One of the things that's exciting for me is that Jesus met people's very real physical needs and not just their spiritual ones. "We certainly believe that God hears the cries of his people."

But, do we hear them? Owen believes that many people who are struggling simply don't know that there are people out there who want to help. "I think there is an information deficit out there," he said. "There are resources out there and available. I don't blame people, though. When you feel like the weight of the world is on your shoulders, you may think

DISCUSS

- Who is someone that has shown you true generosity? How did they show it?
- Is being generous easy or difficult for you?
- Reflect on the following statement by Charles Spurgeon:

Earn all you can, save all you can, and then give all you can.

Giving to God is no loss; it is putting your substance into the best bank. Giving is true having, as the old gravestone said of the dead man, "What I spent I had, what I saved I lost, what I gave I have." (Charles H. Spurgeon, John Ploughman's Talks, 139)

READ: Acts 11:27-30; Galatians 6:10

The story from Acts is very significant for it shows that the early Christians realized the unity and interdependence of the Church. When there was a famine in Palestine the first instinct of the Church at Antioch was to help. It was unthinkable that one part of the Church should be in trouble and that another part should do nothing about it.

LESSON ONE: *Christ followers need to make preparations to be generous*

- How are we to respond to others in tough economic times? Pastor John highlighted the following ways and possibilities:

Motivation for making money as a means for being generous:

- 1) Provide for family
Read 1 Timothy 5:8
- 2) Provide for your children's future
- 3) Pay taxes (contributing to society through money for roads, schools, public services, etc.)
Read Romans 13:6
- 4) Employ other people
- 5) Enhance your self respect
Read Proverbs 10:4
- 6) Enhance your Christian witness
Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12
- 7) Help those in need
Read Proverbs 11:25
- 8) Making an investment in eternity
Read Luke 12:33

- What specific preparations are you making right now to help others? Are you prepared to be generous to those facing tough times?

LESSON TWO: *Christ followers need to be willing to share with others*

- Read and discuss the following passages: Malachi 3:10; Proverbs 11:25; 1 John 3:16
- How can your group, and our Church, be more like the early Christians of Acts and respond generously to others in tough times?
- Discuss and identify at least one specific way your group can show generosity to others struggling in these tough economic times?

CLOSE IN PRAYER