

“THE GIVING TREE”

Generosity and Self-giving Christ like

Christian maturity is measured by the capacity one has to give himself to others for the sake of Christ.

*This exercise consists of three parts and one appendix.
You may go through the three parts in different sittings.*

Part one: “The Giving Tree”.

Part two: “Christ the True Giving Tree”.

Part three: “Christians giving Trees in today’s World”

Appendix: “Activities

Intent of this event.

- ✓ To encourage people to “share” what they have and what they are with others.
- ✓ To grow in love for Jesus, who gave himself up for us.

Uses of these Notes:

Recollections
Talks, homilies,
Personal examination
Prayer sessions.

Introductory Session

Singing hymns and/or bhajans.
Opening prayer.

Part One

The Giving Tree

*Story adapted from “The Giving Tree”
of Shal Silverstein.*

Narrator: Once upon a time, there was a tree, and the tree loved a little boy. Every day the boy would come and gathering the leaves of the tree made them into crowns and play “King of the forest”.

The boy liked the tree very much and the tree was happy!

As the days rolled by the boy grew older and tree was left alone. After along time, the boy came to the tree and the tree said:

Tree: Come boy, come and climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and eat apples and play in my shade and be happy!

Narrator: The boy replied:

Boy; I am too big to climb and play. I want to buy things and have fun. I want some money. Can you give me some money?

Narrator: The tree said:

Tree: I am sorry, friend, I have no money! I have only leaves and apples. Take my apples, Boy, and sell them in the city. Then you will get money and you will be happy.

Narrator: And so the boy climbed up the tree and gathered his apples, and carried them away and the tree was happy. But the Boy stayed away for a long time. And the tree was sad: Then one day, the boy came back, and the tree shook with joy and said:

Tree: Come boy, climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and be happy.

Narrator: The boy said:

Boy I am too busy to climb trees. I want a house to keep warm.

Narrator: The tree replied:

Tree: I have no house. The forest is my house, but you can cut off my branches and build a house for yourself. Then you will be happy.

Narrator: And so the boy cut off his branches and carried them away to build his house. And the tree was happy. But, the boy stayed away for a long time. And when he came back, the tree was so happy that he could hardly speak. The tree exclaimed:

Tree: Come boy! Come and play!

Narrator: The boy replied:

Boy: I am too old and sad to play. I want a boat that will take me far away from here. Can you give me a boat?

Narrator: The tree replied.

Tree: Cut down my trunk and make a boat. Then you can sail away and be happy.

Narrator: And so the boy cut down his trunk. And made a boat and sailed away and the tree was happy, but not really! After a long time the boy came back again; the tree wailed:

Tree: I am sorry boy. I have nothing left to give you. My apples are gone. My trunk is gone! I am sorry. I wish I could give you something, but, I have nothing left. I am just an old stump

Narrator: The boy replied:

Boy: I don't need very much now. Just a quiet place to sit and rest, I am very tired.

Narrator: The old tree straightened himself and said:

Tree: Well, an old stump is good for sitting and resting. Come boy, sit down, sit down and rest.

1. Personal Work. Points for Reflection

Ideally, put your reflections in writing.

1. Did the tree love the boy? How can you make it out? Signs of love
2. Do you approve, do you like the behavior of the tree? Why?
3. Did the boy love the tree?
4. Do you like the behavior of the boy? Why?
5. What's the difference between loving and liking?
6. Explain these sentences
 - Liking is human, Loving divine.
 - God can only love, not like.
 - Loving is other-centered, liking is self-centered
 - The problem with us is that we like people and love things"
7. How much of ourselves should we give to others and for how long? Why?
8. How can we apply this parable to our lives? Give instances.

2. Group Sharing and Discussion

- Participants will share their reflections with the group members.
- Discussion and interaction will follow.
- The moderator may wind up this step by giving a "mini-input" on love and liking, on sharing, on generosity, its characteristics, its benefits, etc.

3. Group Prayer.

- The moderator will lead the participants through a short prayer session on "generosity".
- He may base the prayer session on the words of St Francis of Assisi:

"Make me a channel of your peace,
 It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
 In giving to all men that we receive
 And in dying that we're born to eternal life.
 Oh Master, grant that I may never seek,
 So much to be consoled as to console.
 To be understood as to understand.
 To be loved as to love with all my soul".

- Encourage the participants to pray spontaneously.
- Call out some hymns.

Part Two

Christ the True "Giving Tree".

1. Personal Work. Points for Reflection

Ideally, put your reflections in writing

1. How can you apply the parable of the “Giving Tree” to Christ Our Lord? Explain.
2. Quote some of the words of Jesus in the Gospel, in which he speaks of himself as sort of a “giving tree”.
3. Mention some events in the life of Jesus where He acted like the “giving tree”.
4. In what different ways did Jesus share and give himself to all as a “giving tree”? What did he give us of himself?

2. Group Sharing and Discussion.

- Participants will share their reflections with the group members.
- Discussion and interaction will follow.
- The moderator – quoting Gospels Texts - may wind up this sharing by giving a “mini-input” on:
 - ✓ Christ as the “man for others”,
 - ✓ The one who came “not to be served, but to serve”...
 - ✓ The one who came “to offer his life for the salvation of all”...
 - ✓ The good Shepherd who “puts down his life for his sheep”...
 - ✓ The one who shows the greatest love for his friends “by giving his life for them”.

3. Group Prayer.

The moderator will lead the participants through a short prayer session on “Christ” as a model of generosity, the true “Giving Tree” cut down, shared, sacrificed for all men.

Encourage the participants to pray spontaneously,

- Read and comment on:
 - ✓ Phi. 2/ 1-8 “He annihilated himself...”
 - ✓ Is 53/ 2-9. “He was despised... cut off...”
- Sing “Soul of my Savior”.

Part Three

Christians, “Giving Trees” in Today’s World.

1. Personal Work. Reflection and Examinaton.

Ideally, put your reflections in writing

1. Can you find some texts in the New Testament in which Jesus tells us to be generous and sacrifice ourselves for others as he did?
2. How can we become “giving trees”. Explain and give instances?
3. What are the obstacles in the way of our being generous?
4. Have you ever behaved like a “giving tree”? When? How? Give instances.
5. Has anyone ever been to you a “giving tree” Who? How? Give instances
6. Have you ever failed to behave like a “giving tree” when you had a chance? When? How? Why? Give instances

2. Group Sharing and Discussion

- Participants will share and discuss in the group the reflections on the questions above..
- Interaction will follow

3 Teaching by the moderator:

- Give a mini-input on the following topics and similar ones.
 - ✓ Being Christians, namely “Christ-like”, we have to sacrifice our lives, if need be, for our brothers and sisters.
 - ✓ We should not rule our life by the selfish values of the world but by the values of Christ.
 - ✓ Our works, occupations and professions are, strictly speaking, “vocations”, namely, means to serve God and others, not ourselves.
- Read and comment on the following texts:
 - ✓ Jn. 13/4-17 “Washing of the Feet”.

- ✓ Mk 10/35-45 “If you want to be great... be the slave of all”.
- ✓ Mt. 10/5-15 “Jesus sends his 112 apostles”.
- ✓ Mt. 10/24-25 “No pupil is greater than his master...”
- Paraphrase and recite the prayer for generosity of St Ignatius,

*Dearest Lord, teach us to be generous,
Teach us to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to ask for any reward
save that of knowing we do Your will.*

APPENDIX;

Activities

Note for the Moderator:

- ✓ Time being available, have some activities. Activities are very useful to drive home to the participants the main learning and insights of the day. Best time for activities are the afternoon hours.
- ✓ In small groups or individually, request the participants to prepare some items to exemplify the main ideas of the event.
- ✓ Give time to the participants to prepare their activities.
- ✓ Encourage creativity and originality.
- ✓ Preparation over, the participants, individually or in groups, will present their activities to the house.
- ✓ After each presentation hold a small analysis and evaluation.
- ✓ We offer below a few practical hints to help you and your groups to prepare meaningful activities.

Suggested Activities:

(1) **Creation of Symbols:** The Giving Tree is a very apt symbol to express generosity. The tree gives us leaves, fruits, flowers, timber, shade, etc. Try to find as many symbols as possible to express the same idea of “generosity”, for instance “The oil in the lamp”. It consumes itself slowly and completely to give light to all. \

Similar symbols could be:

- Salt
- Sugar
- Manure
- Roots of a tree
- Grains of wheat in the bread
- Petrol in an engine
- Scent of flowers
- Single notes in a symphony
- Grains of sand in a building
- Grapes in the wine

(2) **Creation of New Parables and Stories:** The parable of The Giving Tree expresses the continuous sharing of what one has with the ones he loved. Invent some new parables to express the same ideas. For instance: The sheep telling the shepherd: If you feel cold, take my wool... If you feel thirsty, drink my milk... If you feel hungry eat my flesh... Similar parables could be created on:

- The sea
- The sun
- The hen

- The cow
- The river
- The fire
- The fountain

(3) **Preparation of Slogans** that express generosity and that may motivate people to share themselves with others. For instance:

- “Give until it hurts”.
- “Share not what you have, but what you are”.
- “When your hands give, close your eyes”.
- “First open your heart, then your pocket.”
- To give is not to share, because the gift without the giver is bare”

(4) **Poster Making:** Prepare some posters on generosity. You are free to use any means you like. Symbolisms, photos, cuttings, drawings, collage, etc.

(5) **Role-playing:** Prepare a role-play, an act, a skit, a mime, a pantomime, etc, on some themes akin to generosity, such as giving, helping, etc. Some role-plays can be inspired on Bible passages and parables.

Presentation of the Activities:

When everything is ready, each group or person that prepared an activity will present it to the house.

Each presentation will be followed by a short analysis and evaluation.

