



BROAD BRANCHES

OF THE KINGDOM

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Vision: Broad Branches of the Kingdom
January 25, 2026

Leader Notes

- This first week is designed to help people understand the missional kingdom vision of the Community Resource Center (CRC), create space to express hopes and fears and questions, and to prepare for the upcoming teaching and discussions around financial discipleship.
- Your role is not to persuade or convince anyone, but to create a hospitable space for people to process and pray, whether they are excited or hesitant or somewhere in between. You're welcome to express your own reactions honestly; there's no pressure to resolve questions or move people to a particular conclusion.
- The biggest hope is to create space for people to share real-life stories around money, church, community impact, and our hopes for the future. When you model vulnerability, it will help others to go there, too.
- If questions about the CRC or The Broad Branches Initiative come up that you can't answer, no problem. Just reach out to smallgroups@hcbellingham.com.

Hook – Getting to know one another

- This is a significant project that Hillcrest is taking on. What is a big project you have been part of at home, school, or work?
- Have you ever been part of a church taking on a project like this? What was it like? What was good? What was hard?

Book – Scripture

- *Read the scripture passages and discuss to understand **what the text is saying:***
- Read Matthew 13:31–32
- Jesus says the Kingdom is like a mustard seed that grows into a tree where birds can nest. What does this image and text tell us about God's Kingdom?
- What does this text tell us about Jesus?
- What does this text tell us about what it means to be part of God's Kingdom?



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Look – Connections to our world today

- *This section focuses on implications about **what this text means** about what's wrong in the world, about trusting God, about who God is, etc.*
- What do you hope Hillcrest will be known for 10 years from now in Bellingham and Whatcom County? How might we exemplify the qualities of the Kingdom pointed to in this passage?
- What excites or encourages you about the CRC as an expression of the Kingdom?
- What concerns or questions do you have about the CRC project?
(Leader: please note any questions that need follow up)

Took – Personal Application

- *This application focuses on **how God is calling us to respond**. This could be personally, as a family, small group, or church. It could be something to believe, to meditate on, to say or do this week.*
- This month, we're stepping into some big and meaningful conversations as a church community:
 - How should we, as a community of Jesus followers, be sharing the good news in word and deed in the Pacific Northwest over the next 20 years?
 - What it means for Hillcrest to embark on a very significant project as a community.
 - How to talk honestly and faithfully about finances and money as a community.
- What does this make you want to pray?
 - For our church?
 - For our wider community?
 - For our small group?
 - For yourself?
- What kind of commitment can you as a group make to pray about these things over the coming weeks?

Time of Prayer

- Pray together for the areas discussed.



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Identity: It's All a Gift, We are Entrusted Caretakers February 1, 2026

Leader Notes

- This week's focus is on **identity**. When it comes to our identity, we always begin with our understanding of God. What we believe about God quietly shapes how we live, trust, and give.
- In our passage today we will find a parable that invites us to consider our picture of God. Is God a hard and stingy taskmaster, or is God a God of abundance and generosity?
- If you would like a helpful introduction to this topic, watch the [Bible Project video on generosity](#). This video does a great job of naming the deeper themes playing as an undercurrent for this particular set of questions. Even better: send it out to your small group to watch before you meet.
- Finally, please find some markers/crayons and paper before your group meets; you'll need them for the closing activity.

Hook – Getting to know one another

- Share about one of the most generous people you know. What is it about the way they view the world that most inspires you?
- What is one of your earliest memories of money?

Book – Scripture

- *Read the scripture passages and discuss to understand **what the text is saying**:*
- Read Matthew 25:14-46
- How does this passage make you feel? What is your initial response to this story?
- What does the servant who receives one talent/bag of gold think about the master?
 - Is that true? If that master represents God, what is true about the master?
- Who did the bags of gold belong to? At the beginning? When the master was gone? When the master returned?



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was the responsibility of the servants? How may this have shaped the way they saw themselves?
- How did the servants differ in their attitude and approach to the gold they were given?

Look – Connections to our world today

- *This section focuses on implications about **what this text means** about what's wrong in the world, about trusting God, about who God is, etc.*
- How might these two ways of seeing yourself lead to different ways of living?
 1. *Seeing everything you have—every resource, talent, gift, relationship—as entrusted to you by God.*
 2. *Seeing everything you have as primarily yours, with the option to “give” or “use” some portion for God at your own discretion.*
- What role do fear and risk play when it comes to using the resources and talents God has given us?
 - The servant with 5 bags of gold didn't know how it would turn out. How do we discern the right amount of godly risk? As individuals? As a church?
- What are some of the barriers to being generous in our world? In what ways does generosity get distorted or misunderstood?

Took – Personal Application

- *This application focuses on **how God is calling us to respond**. This could be personally, as a family, small group, or church. It could be something to believe, to meditate on, to say or do this week.*
- Using crayons and paper, invite your group members to draw the following (stick figures welcome!):
 - An image that captures the generous heart of God.
 - Symbols or images of places where you have experienced God's generosity.
 - An image that captures your identity as a caretaker, trusted by God.
- After the visual reflection, close with one or two of the following prompts:
 - What helps you hold onto the truth of God's generous character?
 - How might God be inviting you to see yourself differently? Is there a word, image or “name” that fits this identity?



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- What new attitude, posture, or small practice might you live out this week in response?
- What new attitude, posture, or practice might we live out as a community in response to this truth?

Time of Prayer



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Purpose: Life that is Truly Life

February 8, 2026

Leader Notes

- This week covers the idea that generosity is a fundamental part of our **purpose** as creatures of a generous God, and the **purpose** of the resources and talents God has gifted to us. Last week we learned that we are God's caretakers; this week we will focus on what that caretaking is aimed at.
- This week's questions consider a passage from the Old Testament, when God gives a purpose to Abraham (still called "Abram" in this passage): to bless the nations around him with what God gives him. God trusts Abraham with an abundance of His goodness (provisions and wealth, protection, forgiveness, His presence and ways) not for private benefit, but in order for Abraham to share them.
- Help your group make the connection to the sermon text, Matthew 22:34-40. Jesus' summary of the law, love God and your neighbor, echoes this same purpose that is given to Abraham: "love the Lord with all you have... and through love of neighbor."
- Generosity can take many forms. Be sure to allow the conversation to include generosity in other areas of life: time, talents, hospitality, as well as finances. This makes space for people who truly feel like they are not in a financial place to be giving more.
- At the same time, don't avoid the reality that financial generosity is part of this calling to pass on the blessings of a generous God. Generosity with our finances can serve as a powerful countercultural witness to trust in God and love our neighbor in response to the message of materialism of our day.

Hook – Getting to know one another

- In the family you grew up in, what were your talents and gifts for?
 - In other words, if you were good at school, was it:
 - Up to you if you did anything with that or not?
 - Important to be seen as the best, smartest in the school?
 - A way to get a good job and provide for your family?
 - A way to provide safety and security for yourself later in life?
 - Something else?



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- In the family you grew up in, what was money for? (Fun, safety, stability, survival, something else?)
- What is your primary feeling about money? Fear? Desire for more? Shame? Ambivalence?

Book – Scripture

- Read the passage and discuss to understand **what the text is saying**:
- Read Genesis 12:1-3
- What purpose do you see in this passage for Abraham?
- How was Abraham supposed to fulfill this purpose?
- What are the ways in which God blessed Abraham and his descendants?
- What are the ways Abraham and his descendants did well at passing on God's blessings to the nations? What are some ways they failed to fulfill this purpose?
- Next, read Matthew 22:34-40 and 1 Timothy 6:17-19.
- If you had to turn these biblical principles into bumper stickers, what would the bumper stickers say?
- What connections do you see between what God said to Abram, what Jesus commanded, and what Paul taught?

Look – Connections to our world today

- *This section focuses on implications about **what this text means** about what's wrong in the world, about trusting God, about who God is, etc.*
- In Abraham's day, God was calling Abraham to behave differently than those around him. And in our lives, God calls us to behave differently than those around us.
 - If someone lived the bumper stickers principles, what would that look like? How would it be different from the way many in North America live today?
 - Who have you known who is an example of this kind of different living?
- What do these passages say the finances we have are to be used for?
 - What is inspiring to you about that?
 - What is challenging to you about that?



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Took – Personal Application

- *This application focuses on **how God is calling us to respond**. This could be personally, as a family, small group, or church. It could be something to believe, to meditate on, to say or do this week.*
- Just as Abraham was blessed, how has the Hillcrest community been blessed by God? How might those blessings be in order to be a blessing to others?
- The CRC is an effort to take what God has given us and bless others with it. How do you envision the CRC doing this based on what you know about it?
- Take an honest inventory of your life. What would it look like to think about each of these areas as places completely for loving God and loving others?
 - Your job or school
 - Your free time
 - Your hobbies
 - Your home
 - Your finances
- When you hear about Jesus inviting you into “the life that is truly life” and having “treasures in heaven,” what does that make you want to pray?

Time of Prayer



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Practice: The Practice of Intentional Generosity
February 15, 2026

Leader Notes

- In this last week of the series we will be taking the conversations around identity and purpose and turning them into **practice**.
- The reality is that no one becomes generous by accident. Spiritual practices are a key part of walking in the way of Jesus. These practices are not about good works; it is a response to Jesus' grace towards us.
- Over this series we will have seen some changes of heart, some deep thoughts, some personal goals and hopes. Make sure to plan for time to share as a group
- The six guidelines laid out in this week's message are helpful definition points for generous giving. Take some time to define together what each of these terms could look like in practice, for people across all types of financial situations.

Hook – Getting to know one another

- What were conversations about money like in your family growing up?
 - Was it talked about a lot? Not at all?
 - Was giving money talked about? How was it talked about?
 - What was taught about giving in your family growing up?

Book – Scripture

- *Read the scripture passages and discuss to understand **what the text is saying**:*
- 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
- In each of these passages, Paul uses words and phrases worth thinking deeply about, like “in keeping with your income,” “saving,” “sparingly/generously,” “thanksgiving,” and others. Identify as a group unique or significant words or phrases within these passages.
 - How do these words and phrases help guide us to a better understanding of generosity?
- Read each passage aloud again, slowly. This time, hear these words as a loving and challenging instruction to the early, growing church.



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- What sticks out to you in this context?
- What would feel difficult, impossible?
- What would feel encouraging?
- If you were to create general guidelines for Christian giving from these passages, what would you include?
- What does this passage teach us about the way Christian communities can talk about actual financial giving?

Look – Connections to our world today

- This section focuses on implications about **what this text means** about what's wrong in the world, about trusting God, about who God is, etc.
- If someone is to be generous as described in these passages, what are the implications for a person's larger financial situation? For their standard of living?
- The following are 6 principles that can be drawn from 1 and 2 Corinthians on how to practice giving. Your group may have identified a few others as well.
 - 1 - Regular
 - 2 - Proportional
 - 3 - Sacrificial
 - 4 - Voluntary
 - 5 - Joyful
 - 6 - Motivated by grace of Jesus
- Talk about each one. What do you think these principles mean practically in the life of a Christian?

Took – Personal Application

- *This application focuses on **how God is calling us to respond**. This could be personally, as a family, small group, or church. It could be something to believe, to meditate on, to say or do this week.*
- Think back to week 1, when we first began talking about finances and generosity.
 - What were your feelings about starting this series?
 - Has anything changed for you over the last couple weeks? How so?
- What aspects of the practice of giving as described in 1 and 2 Corinthians comes most naturally to you? What aspects are most challenging to you?



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- Are there ways you feel led to approach the practice of giving differently because of what God said to you through this series? How so?
- If your group hasn't received pledge cards yet, please make sure each person has a chance to get one.
 - *We see these pledge cards as a way for our church community to practice intentional giving, together. There is no desire for anyone to feel pressured. Rather, we want to invite every person who calls Hillcrest home to prayerfully consider joining us in the practice of intentionally planned giving no matter the amount.*
 - *What questions or information would help you feel at peace as you think about your giving?*

Time of Prayer

- Take time to pray for Hillcrest, the life of generosity at our church, and the lives to be impacted through Hillcrest Church and the entire Community Resource Center project.