

## Checking In

1. Take a few minutes to check in with everyone, see how they are doing, and open with prayer.

## Learning

### Knowing God

#### Key Doctrines

- *Creation* – God has created all things, thus all things belong to God.
- *Providence* – God is the sustainer and provider of all things.
- *Church* – As those called by God in love the church is called to love one another and love our neighbor. This love is made known through sacrificial giving.

#### Key Observations

- *Read: Psalm 24:1-2, Psalm 89:11-12, Psalm 100:3*
  - How does the doctrine of creation inform our understanding of God's authority and ownership?  
*What these three Psalms and many other passages throughout Scripture make clear is that God is the Creator of all things and as a result is the owner of all things. God did not create out of lack or need, but rather out of love and grace. In short, God's ownership is not to meet a need, but rather to share his love.*

- How does God's ownership of all things shed light on the kind of relationship people are designed to have with God?

*As part of God's creation we belong to God. As the only part of creation made in God's image we function as unique possessions of God. In Mark 12:13-17 Jesus is questioned by the religious leaders about paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus' answer startled the listeners. He said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." In short, what Jesus was saying was that while the coins were marked by the image of Caesar which identified him as their "owner", all people are marked by the image of God which means that God is the owner of all people.*

- *Read: Psalm 65:9-10, Romans 11:36, 1 Corinthians 4:7.*

- How does God continue to relate to the world he has created?  
*God not only created all things, but he continues to sustain all things. This is what the doctrine of providence is all about. We are often tempted to view God as aloof to creation (which is Deism), but the Christian view is that God is active in creation. Creation is sustained by God's active presence. The needs of creation are met by God's gracious presence.*

- The Apostle Paul's question in 1 Cor. 4:7 implies that everything we have comes from God. How might a proper view of God's providence inform the way we relate to our money and possessions?

*God's active and gracious presence in creation is not just a general truth, but is also a personal reality in our lives. God is the one who sustains our lives and who provides for our needs. Everything we have is a gift from God. It is tempting to view our hard work, talents, education or resources as the reason we have money, food and possession. In other words, to believe that we are the sustainers and providers of our own needs. However, even these things are gifts from God. He has given us the ability to learn, gifted us with certain talents, and graced us with resources.*

➤ *Read: Mark 12:41-44*

- How does the widow's giving demonstrate trust in God? What does this teach us about our call to give as followers of Jesus?

*The widow's radical act of giving all that she had perhaps offends our common sensibilities for wise living. She has no "safety net." And yet, what Jesus seeks to teach us is that she has put her trust in the only truly faithful and dependable "safety net", God himself. She has truly entrusted her life to God. The point is not that we all must give every penny we have to the next offering at church, but rather that Jesus is looking for hearts of faith. Jesus makes it clear elsewhere that if we truly trust our lives to God, the loving owner, we have nothing to be anxious about (Matthew 6:25-34).*

- How important is sacrifice as Jesus talks about the difference between the offering of the rich and the offering of the widow? What does this teach us about our call to give as followers of Jesus?

*The contrast drawn between the rich and their lavish offerings and the widow and her meager offering clearly rests on the nature of the sacrifice involved. The rich may be giving a lot, but the inference is that it requires very little of them. While the widow has put in a little, but it has required much. The widow has made a great sacrifice, and as a result what she has given is more in the kingdom than the amount given by the rich.*

## **Listening**

### *Responding to God*

- In light of hearing this week's sermon, our study together, and listening to God's Word, how might God be inviting you to take a step of obedience?

## **Loving**

### *Obeying God*

- What is happening in my own life right now that I need to share and for which I need prayer?
- This week I am committed to praying for \_\_\_\_\_ about:

## **Checking Out**

- What was most meaningful about this group session for you (*Give each person 1-2 sentences to share*)?
  
- Close in Prayer and Read 2 Corinthians 9:7.