

counter cultural

week one

Week 1

Our Radically Generous God



Key Verse: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord.” Isaiah 55:8

Before the class begins

Pray that God would open your eyes in a fresh way to the two major truths of this lessons: 1 – That God’s ways are not our ways and 2 – That generosity is the way of God. As you get ready to lead the youth in this way, you are potentially shaping their thinking in a way that will alter the course of their lives. So, pray for a deep connection with both the material and the youth that you will be leading.

I. Introduction (15 minutes)

- **Discussion Question:** Have you ever been to a culture somewhere in the world that’s different than ours? For example, have you gone to another country where they ate strange foods or did things differently than we do in the U.S.?
 - Break the ice: You can poke fun at a neighboring town as a “foreign culture” if there is a rival high school there, etc.
 - **Read,** “8 Jaw Dropping Traditions from Other Cultures”
 - **Say,** “When you are in other cultures, you have to adapt to their customs. But, as Christians, the Bible says that we should not be satisfied with the culture of the world around us. In fact, it indicates that we are part of a culture apart from the culture of the United States. We are part of God’s unique culture called the kingdom of God. And God’s culture often looks completely different from our culture.”
 - Isaiah 55:8 says, “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are my ways your ways,’ declares the Lord.”

II. Discussion (35 minutes)

- **Discussion Question:** What are some examples that show that God’s ways are different than our ways and His thoughts are different than our thoughts?

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- **Say**, “Over the next 4 weeks, we are going to look at one specific way that God’s ways are counter-cultural. We are going to see that – at least in this one specific manner - His ways do not align with the ways of America’s culture.”
- **Discussion Question:** In our culture, people like to get and accumulate things. We like to accumulate money so that we can buy all of the “toys” that we want to buy. If money wasn’t an issue, and you could get anything you wanted, what would you get?
 - **Say**, “It’s normal for us to desire to get nice things. That’s part of our culture. But, did you know that instead of seeking to **get** nice things, God is continually working to **give** nice things? God’s culture is not a culture of getting and hoarding, but instead it’s a culture of giving and serving. It’s counter-cultural for us, but it is the right way to live according to God.”
- **An Example from Scripture – Feeding of the 5000**
- **Read Mark 6:30-44**
- **Discussion Question:** Where did you see the generosity of God in these verses?
 - Possible answers: He was sensitive to the disciples needs and encouraged them to get rest (v. 31); He had compassion for them and gave them understanding through His teachings (v. 34); He provided food for the multitudes (v.41); He gave more than they needed (v. 43).
 - Bring the discussion back to the big idea that **God is the first and most generous giver.**
- **Discussion Question:** What other points in Scripture can you think of that demonstrate God’s generosity toward people?
- **Discussion Question:** Do you think it is possible to be a disciple of Jesus (someone who learns from His teachings and follows His ways) and *NOT* live generously?

III. Action (10 Minutes)

- **God Gives**
 - Distribute the “God Gives” handout
 - Give the youth a minute to look through the 4-page handout
 - Share one or two of the statements that have significant meaning for you and ask for one or two volunteers to share the statements of God’s generosity that initially strike them as they look through the list.
- **Say**, “This week, pray that God help you to see exactly how generous He is. Pray that He would help you to imitate His ways as you interact with your friends and family. This week, pray that God would help you to be counter-culturally generous.”
- **Close the group with a time of prayer that focuses on celebrating the generous nature of God.**

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God Gives

A record of God's generosity through each book of the Bible

Genesis	God gives us life and access to His creativity (1:1ff)
Exodus	God gives salvation to captives (15:1-2)
Leviticus	God gives insight to the future and regular reasons to feast (Chapter 23)
Numbers	God gives blessings when the world is calling down curses (Chp's 22-24) God gives water for the thirsty (20:1ff)
Deuteronomy	God gives laws to protect us from ourselves (Chp 4ff) God gives the ability to produce wealth (8:18)
Joshua	God gives His inheritance to those who follow Him (11:23)
Judges	God gives strength (Samson - Chp 13ff)
Ruth	God generously provides protection to the foreigner and the widow (2:12)
1 Samuel	God gives victory over fear (David and Goliath - Chp 17)
2 Samuel	God gives honor to the broken (Mephibosheth - Chp 9) and restoration to the fallen (David and Bathsheba - Chp 11)
1 Kings	God gives proof of His presence (Mt Carmel - Chp 18)
2 Kings	God gives vision to the spiritually blind (6:17)
1 Chronicles	God gives provisions for His work (29:14)
2 Chronicles	God gives talents and abilities (Chp 3ff)
Ezra	God gives His people favor with influential people (7:8-10)
Nehemiah	God appoints people to stand in the gap for you while you are down (4:13-14)
Esther	God gives influence to the powerless (2:17-18)
Job	God gives restoration to the devastated (42:10-15)
Psalms	God gives redemption to those enslaved to sin 130:7-8) God gives compassion. He's slow to anger and abounding in love (103:8)
Proverbs	God gives wisdom (1:1ff)
Ecclesiastes	God gives rain - and everything else - in its proper season (3:1-8)

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Song of Solomon	God gives human love that is better than wine (1:2)
Isaiah	God gives a place in His family (56:4ff)
Jeremiah	God gives multiple warnings before He allows punishment (11:6-8) God gives a future and a hope (29:11)
Lamentations	God gives companionship during suffering (3:31-33)
Ezekiel	God gives life to dead bones (Chp 37)
Daniel	God rescues the perishing and brings them into a Kingdom that never falls (6:26-27)
Hosea	God redeems His lovers who have prostituted themselves with other pleasures (3:1-3)
Joel	God gives us back the years that were stolen by catastrophes
Amos	God gives justice to the abused (5:18-24)
Obadiah	God gives judgments that are fair (v. 15)
Jonah	God gives opportunities to repent (3:10)
Micah	God gives new life to the hopeless (4:10)
Nahum	God gives a hiding place in tough times (1:7)
Habakkuk	God gives joy and peace beyond understanding (3:17-19)
Zephaniah	God gives His presence and writes love songs for His people (3:17)
Haggai	God gives specific, sovereign purposes to each person (2:21-23)
Zechariah	God gives protection (2:5) God gives us a spirit of grace and prayer (12:10)
Malachi	God gives us stability - He doesn't change (3:6)
Matthew	God gives His touch to the untouchables (10:8)
Mark	God gives food to the hungry (6:31ff)
Luke	God gives active love - stepping into the pain of creation rather than walking away (Incarnation - Chp 1ff)
John	God gives us His Word (1:1-14) as the way, the truth and the life - in the flesh - so that we can understand it. (14:6)
Acts	God gives us community for encouragement and strength (2:42-47)

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Romans	God gives grace when we deserve death (5:18-21) God gives insiders the fulfillment of His promises and outsiders a way in (15:8-9)
1 Corinthians	God gives us spiritual gifts beyond our genetically entrusted abilities (Chp 12)
2 Corinthians	God gives us a new life and new identity in Christ (5:15-21)
Galatians	God gives freedom from the harness of slavery (5:1)
Ephesians	God gives us unity through the cross (2:11-22)
Philippians	God gives eternal inheritance in exchange for our punishment (2:1-11)
Colossians	God gives us the opportunity to share in His glory (1:27)
1 Thessalonians	God gives us the grace to handle poor treatment from others (2:14-16)
2 Thessalonians	God gives us eternal encouragement and good hope (2:16)
1 Timothy	God gives us His message - entrusting us to teach it to others (4:13)
2 Timothy	God gives nearness during trials (4:16)
Titus	God gives promises of His return (2:13-14)
Philemon	God provides forgiveness to the runaways (vv. 8-10)
Hebrews	God gives us faith and a great cloud of witnesses to cheer us on (11-12:1)
James	God gives His ear to our prayers (5:13-18)
1 Peter	God gives us the mind of Christ (4:1 and 1 Cor 2:16)
2 Peter	God gives confirmation of His Word (1:16-18)
1 John	God gives remarkable love (4:7-10)
2 John	God gives rewards for following His leadership (vv. 8-9)
3 John	God gives us the joy of seeing faith growing in other people (v.4)
Jude	God gives His people a spotless record (v. 24)
Revelation	God gives a New Heaven and New Earth where there is no more suffering (Chp's 21-22)