Opening Prayer:
Lord Jesus, You came to earth to be our Savior from sin and death. By doing so, You showed us how to live lives of love. May we learn how to love our neighbors, our families, and our brothers and sisters in Christ so that our words and actions glorify You. Help us to know the expectations You have for us to give to others and also to receive humbly from You and from others. In Your holy name we pray. Amen

Find a partner and—while making eye contact—smile at each other. How did the smile make you feel, both as giver and recipient?
All answers are encouraged. Some will have a different experience. Remind participants that our personalities and experiences affect our responses.

God's Model of Giving

God gives us tangible and intangible gifts. He is our model, the perfect Giver. List as many gifts God gives as you can. Turn to Scripture for added gifts.

Luke 22:19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”
John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.
2 Corinthians 5:5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.
James 4:6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

You may want to have a copy of Luther's Small Catechism handy and read the meanings to the three Articles of the Apostle’s Creed. God gives us our bodies and all we need to preserve them, our salvation which includes Christ’s gift of life paid for on the cross as well as the gift of being called to faith by the Holy Spirit. In addition, God gives us the gift of Baptism, Holy Communion, and more grace. Read Psalm 104 for further discussion.

What does Romans 8:32 tell you about God's giving?
Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
God spared nothing, not even His only Son so that we too could be called sons and daughters of the King.

There are several Greek words translated to "give." One word, epichoregeo, captures the heart of giving as God gives: to supply fully, abundantly, lavishly. Epichoregeo refers to the work of the Holy Spirit to individuals and His church. Epichoregeo is the word used in Galatians 3:5. What does it say to you about God's giving? Upon what is His giving based?
Galatians 3:5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—
We realize we have been given the Spirit, not because of the law, but because we have been given faith to believe. Without faith, we wouldn’t understand the true gift of what the Holy Spirit has done and continues to do in our lives. And, without the Holy Spirit, we wouldn’t have faith.

Why is following God's example especially difficult when you deem a person undeserving? What does Romans 5:8 say that can help you overcome that difficulty?
Romans 5:8 But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Our sinful minds see sin in others, sometimes more than we see it in ourselves. We can look to our Father
who gave the greatest gift, His Son, and remember that He did immeasurable good for us — even before
we came to faith and while we were sinners.

Following God's Example
Why do you give gifts of any kind to others? (Varied answers, but do take the time to share)
What do these verses tell you about how you should give?
2 Corinthians 9:7-8 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under
compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that
having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.
Give with happiness and joy. Then remember that God gives in this same way to us.

Discuss the principles of giving found in:
Matthew 10:8b You received without paying; give without pay.
Matthew 5:43-47 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your
enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may
be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends
rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over,
will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”
A true gift has no strings attached. We should not be bothered by what we will get back from giving a
gift. We can give gifts to all people, not only those with whom we agree. And then, when we give, we
give generously. Press, shake, and let the gifts run over!

What can you give to God?
Psalm 63:4 So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.
Psalm 119:57 The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words.
Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a
living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
2 Corinthians 9:11-12 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us
will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the
saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.
We bless God when we live lives according to His commandments, keep His Word, use our very bodies
as sacrifices for Him. And we can give thanks to the Lord, remembering where all our gifts come from.

What can you give to people?
Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled
the law.
Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the
widow’s cause.
Philippians 2:4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.
1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.
Love each other. Do Good and seek justice. Care for others who have no one to care for them. Take care
of each other. Encourage each other to do good for the Body of Christ.

Receiving
Take turns smiling at your partner again, but this time the smile should be returned with either a frown or
a blank look. How does it make you feel, both as recipient and giver?
Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35b), but He did not say we should not receive. A giver must have someone to receive their gift. Many times, it is very difficult, especially for Christians, to be on the receiving end. Why do you think that is so?

Listen to answers. Perhaps, as Christians we are compelled to give so often that we don’t consider that when we are receiving a gift, we allow others to give as well.

What attitudes and behaviors are necessary to both give and receive according to James 4:6? Why?

**James 4:6** But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Humbleness. In our humbleness God gives grace. As we realize our need for His gift of grace, we also learn we cannot gain this grace on our own. We need the Giver.

**God's Big Picture**

We often think of receiving and giving gifts as an individual act, but God has a bigger picture. Giving and receiving is not just about you! And yet it is! Explain by using:

**1 Corinthians 12:4-7** Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

**1 Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

We should celebrate each other’s gifts that God has given. Often our sinful nature can allow us to be jealous or feel inferior to those who can do things better than we can. In Christ’s body we can know that other’s abilities are given and honed for the good of God’s people.

Receiving and giving allow for distribution of God's grace to others in Jesus’ name. Using Hebrews 12:5-11 and Proverbs 27:17, what do we discover about some giving? Why is what God and we sometimes must "give" not always pleasant but necessary? How does this giving attest to the principle of God's big picture for believers? (Ephesians 4:14-16)

**Hebrews 12:5-11**. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

**Proverbs 27:17** Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

God instructs us to sharpen each other — discipline each other. It is our job to help each other to live as God’s children are told to live in Scripture.

Giving and receiving are models of God's grace, and grace is needed to both give and receive. Did you realize you have been given? According to John 17: 20-24, what was the gift and why was it given?

**John 17: 20-24** “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire
that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Our gift is to be one with the Father — our Heavenly Father. While we humbly fear Him, we also are instructed to call on Him as “dear children ask their dear father.”

We can share God’s gift of grace because we have first received His grace. We have done nothing to earn it. Why should sharing God's grace be a priority?

**Acts 20:24** But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. God’s grace is the greatest gift we have ever received. We now get to share that gift with others so they too may know the saving love of our Lord Jesus.

Discuss ways you can share God's grace.
Include opportunities of sharing things (in-gatherings, monetary gifts) and sharing God’s love through His Word.

God will supply, but we must apply. *Freely you have received, freely give* (Matthew 10:8b).

What can you do this week to receive and give God's grace?
(Discuss as time allows. You may even find a new opportunity for yourself or your group to share God’s love in your community.)

Each look at your partner and with a smile say in unison, *To each one of us, grace has been given* (Ephesians 4:7).

**Closing Prayer**
Heavenly Father, You have gifted us with bodies and all we need to support them, so we may live to Your glory. Jesus, Our Savior, You have given Your very life so that we can live eternally with You. O Holy Spirit, our Comforter, You have called us to faith in Christ. Help us to see the opportunities we have to give gifts of love, sustenance, and comfort to those around us so they too, may know of Your amazing love for us. In Your Holy Name we pray. Amen.

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