



ENTER God's presence

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

- Psalm 23:5-6

Heavenly Father, you are the Lord of all creation, all that is belongs to you and yet you invite us to share in all your goodness. So meet us once again as we gather around your word. May it be for us a banquet table which fills us to overflowing with your goodness and love. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week, in your highs and your lows?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **When it comes to life, do you like off-road adventures or sealed road experiences? Explain.**

The 4WD “all-terrain” vehicle...It has become *the car* of the pandemic. Four of the top five “searched for” vehicles are in that category. If you have a good one for sale, second hand prices are up 30%. Designed to be taken off road, over obstacles and through terrain conventional vehicles can't manage, they give traction when other transport falters. They move when everything else stops.

Generosity is just like that. It creates momentum, traction, forward progress when everything else wants to slow you down, drag you back, put you back where it seems safe, secure, stable... and stuck.

Paul gives the Corinthian church the keys to the 4WD of discipleship: Generosity. It's not an owner's manual of guidelines, rules & tips, but the power of God who enlists us in his work of transforming hearts and lives by the abundant gift of Jesus Christ working through us. Paul knows God's abundance to us is only limited by his abundance through us and as we open our hands and hearts more widely, more freely and more generously, we find the Father refilling our lives and taking us on off-road adventures where there is an oversupply in joy, praise, thanksgiving & glory as we see multiplication of generosity bring exponential blessing to others

Week beginning
Sunday 26th September 2021

Worship series:
Authentic Generosity



VERSE for the week

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:7-8



REMEMBER this week

Generosity is the 4WD of discipleship that gives traction in every situation, taking you on an exhilarating, scary and life transforming adventure of trust in God.



LISTEN attentively

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

5. **What stands out for you in this text? What questions does it raise for you?**
6. **In verse 6 we could easily replace the word 'sow' with 'give' and the word 'reap' with 'receive'. Dose this change how you hear this passage? Is this the way you see things work in the real world? Explain.**
7. **Many of us in our urban contexts may not appreciate the picture Paul uses about planting seed. What other analogies from an urban/city environment might help portray a similar idea?**

The attractional power of generosity has been recognised and used and abused by monarchs, governments, big business and advertising for centuries. People will generally pledge allegiance more readily to a generous and benevolent leader and will follow them more happily than they might do under the threat of pain or death by an authoritarian dictator. Companies and advertisers have employed similar tactics too, as they try to convince you that their company is generously offering you a better product at a cheaper price than their competitors. This kind of approach is incredibly enticing to most of us because when people are generous to us, it makes us feel valued and appreciated. So much so, that many people will buy products which they do not actually need or want, simply as a result of good advertising.

8. **Has someone's expression of generosity toward you ever sparked you to do something unplanned or unexpected?**

Generosity is a self multiplying phenomenon. Those who experience the generosity of others are themselves more likely to be generous when the opportunity arises. This is because receiving the generosity of another, helps to break down the illusion which the world has created around us and encourages us to believe; that is, the only person who will look out for you is you. We have said right from the beginning of this generosity series, that God's act of generosity to us, expressed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, is the cause of all generosity. It is because of this that we can be motivated to be generous to others, because God was first generous to us.

9. **Paul spells out in this text "Each of you should give..." Why do you think Paul says this**
10. **"God loves a cheerful giver" – this is the only time in the Bible that speaks of God loving an action that we do. What is the significance of this?**



GROW deeper

Have a look at Mark 5:21-34

Here are three parables of Jesus which seem somewhat unrelated on the surface but which all speak to the multiplication of generosity to some extent. Firstly, why would you light a lamp and then hide the light under a bowl or under the bed? The purpose of the light is to shine out and bring light into the dark places. Secondly, in the parable of the growing seed all the man does is scatter the seed on the ground, the seed grows independently of anything else he does and it produces a harvest. Finally in the parable of the mustard seed, this tiny seed grows until it provides shade and shelter to the whole garden.

When we are stuck and failing to make 'progress' in our lives or in spreading the gospel of Jesus, it can often be because our generosity is low. The light of Jesus love, which is now alive in us is supposed to shine out to others. When we are tired of feeling defeated, that light is often hard for others to see. Sometimes we fail to scatter seed at all because we fear the work that goes along with nurturing it but here God tells us that he will grow the seed, if only we will scatter it. Finally in the mustard seed story, the more God grows us, the more capacity we have to provide shade and shelter to others.

11. **Where are you stuck or what obstacles in your life at the moment are causing you to spin your wheels and prevent you from moving ahead? How might generosity give you traction?**
12. **In what ways can our generosity be a vehicle which helps others to navigate the ‘off-road adventures’ of their lives?**

Time and time again Jesus used agricultural metaphors to give a pictorial representation of how a single act of generosity could grow and multiply into a full and plentiful harvest. Today it might be more beneficial to think about Covid-19 transmission. Each time a person encounters someone carrying the virus, transmission seems to occur from one to the other. The same is true of authentic Christian generosity. When the love of God, expressed in Jesus, drives and motivates our acts of generosity, then they will always multiply and produce fruit, not only in others, but also in us as well.



LIVE purposefully

Bono, the lead singer of the band *U2* said this about God’s grace, *“And yet, along comes this idea called Grace to upend all that “As you reap, so will you sow” stuff. Grace defies reason and logic. Love interrupts, if you like, the consequences of your actions, which in my case is very good news indeed, because I’ve done a lot of stupid stuff.”* Multiplication may be an exercise of mathematics and logic, but the multiplication of God’s grace and generosity is something else entirely. It defies our logic and expectations. All it takes is for us to make the decision to give generously and as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:8, “God is able (is powerful) to bless you abundantly, so that in all things and at all times you will have what you need.”

13. **How does the assurance of always having what you need, regardless of the situation help you feel more free to give generously to others?**
14. **Many people operate as if there is a finite limit to wealth and success, thinking that the only way to have more for yourself is to take it from others. How can your generosity help to dispel that myth?**
15. **Everyone should experience the thrill of an off-road adventure at some point in their lives. Four wheel driving adventures require planning before setting out. What plan do you have in place for your generosity? When is the last time you reviewed it?**
16. **How will you allow yourself to ‘go off road’ with generosity this week? Go on and see where God leads you.**



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for his abundant gifts and blessings to us.
- Pray for the church around the world, that we would always act generously towards others regardless of their circumstance and that this generosity would lead them to encounter the love and grace of Jesus.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to refocus your heart’s desires and to help you recognize and appreciate all that God has done for you.
- Pray for an increase of generosity around the world, especially towards the misplaced, the homeless and the refugees.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], you are a blessing from God. Amen.