



ENTER God's presence

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it...The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God their Saviour

- Psalm 24:1,4-5

Heavenly Father, never has greater generosity been shown than the generous gift of your son Jesus Christ to save and redeem us from our sin. As we gather again around your word, help each of us grasp more completely the depth of your love and generous heart towards us, your people. May that knowledge grow in us hearts that are generous towards others and lives that bring glory to you. 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. **What is the greatest expression of generosity anyone has ever shown you?**
4. **Do you find it easy or difficult to be generous to others? Share.**

The beginning matters.

The foundation is important for any building project.

Buildings need a good foundation to stand the strain of the weight upon it and remain stable whatever stresses are applied to it. Relationships need a strong foundation of trust to grow strong and withstand the pressures of life. The early years of education are labelled as the foundation years for what students learn in those years are critical as a base on which other learning is built. It's no different with generosity.

The beginning matters. The foundation is important.

The journey toward authentic generosity starts with the posture of the heart, God's heart that so loved the world and so loved you, that he gave. When you take hold of that, it will lead you on a journey of joyful transformation from which you will never look back.

Week beginning
Sunday 5th September 2021

Worship series:
Authentic Generosity



VERSE for the week

All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 4:15



REMEMBER this week

Generosity is an expression of grace that leads to abundant living!



LISTEN attentively

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

- 5. What stands out for you in this text? What questions does it raise for you?**
- 6. There is a lot in this passage about the death and resurrection of Christ being present or visible or active in our lives. What does this mean to you?**

Most English dictionaries define 'generosity' as the act of being generous – of free and open handed giving. Yet there are plenty of examples of those who give large sums of money or time or resources, not simply from a desire to give or from any sense of generosity, but with ulterior motives, or tax deductions, or personal gain as the driving motivation. Are these acts of giving really acts of generosity?

Paul, in his second letter to the Corinthians presents an argument which forms a good basis for the foundation of Authentic Christian generosity. It is an argument based first and foremost on the generous love and grace of God expressed to us in the gift of himself for our sake in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- 7. How authentic are your acts of generosity? Are they usually freely and joyfully given, or are they often offered with strings attached or out of a sense of guilt or obligation?**
- 8. In verse 15, Paul says, "all this is for your benefit..." what is the 'all this' which he is referring to?**

God has done so much for his people. In fact it would be fair to say that everything God does is for his people. He was under no compulsion to create a world in which we could live and thrive. When Adam and Eve turned their backs on God's order of things and decided to do things their own way, God provided clothing for them and a promise in which he ultimately gave himself as a sacrifice for the sake of rebellious humanity as he hung on the cross. All this was done for your benefit, it is true, but read to the end of verse 15 again; what is the intended consequence of all these things that God has done for your benefit? The intended result of all God has done for you is to cause you to overflow with thankfulness and bring glory to God.



GROW deeper

The foundation of generosity is a matter of the heart. It begins with God's generous heart of love and compassion towards his people. Only when we really begin to grasp the enormity of God's gift of himself for our sake do our own hearts begin to transform into hearts of thankfulness and praise.

Take another look at 2 Corinthians 4:15-18

Here it is again, the heart. "Therefore we do not lose heart". Because of all God has done for us we do not lose heart even when things around us look bleak, when our bank accounts look lean, when our mortgage repayments seem to loom over us. All of these stresses, all of the struggles and burdens of this life pale in comparison to the riches of what God has promised to those who place their trust in him. The problem for us tends to be perspective. In many ways it is not very different to the situation with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God had given to them every fruit bearing tree for food, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had abundantly provided for their every physical need. Yet when faced with the realisation that there was more to be had, they opted to step outside of God's abundant provision and take what was not theirs to take.

- 9. What tends to be your default focus when it comes to wealth, do you find yourself thankful for what you have or are you usually yearning for more? Why?**
- 10. How are your finances shaping your decision making at this time?**

The reality of the situation for us is this, according to 2020 research, if you own assets worth over \$100,000 (that's car, house, cash in the bank, superannuation all combined) you are part of the 12.4% of the world's population who own 83.9% of the world's wealth. Right from the beginning of creation humanity has believed that it has needed more, that it should have more. Most of us spend at least some time thinking about what it would be like if we had a bit more disposable income at some time or another. It can be sobering to think that if you own your own home you have more than 87.6% of the rest of the world's population. The gap between what we think we should have and what we need is usually very large and our perception of our own wealth is usually focussed on what we don't have rather than all the blessings God has already given us. For most of us, our hearts are out of whack when it comes to wealth. But a heart that recognises and is filled with thanksgiving for the exuberant generosity and blessings of God is what leads us into living abundantly from that blessing.



LIVE purposefully

We live in a world that encourages us to strive for more; more money, more fame, more power, more time, more knowledge... you name it, we want more of it. All that chasing after more only becomes a new kind of slavery. Even though we may achieve a greater sense of financial freedom, we end up bound to long hours at work, sacrificing time with friends or family, or living to achieve goals and tasks that others always set for us or seeking to impress those who hold the key to our next promotion or payrise. God doesn't need us to impress him, he declared that he was impressed when he made us and said that we were good (Genesis 1:30). The foundation of Generosity is being impressed by God and his generous heart and abundant blessing and provision to us. That is what frees us to be openhanded with our giving and generosity toward others because we no longer need to fear not having enough, because we know that every good thing comes to us from God and he has an unlimited supply of blessing. It is the generosity of God which overflows in our lives and transforms us into generous people also.

11. What would your spending habits and financial decisions say about your confidence in God's provision to someone looking on from outside?

12. What is one generous, fun act that you could do for someone this week to bring them joy?



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 the continuing situation in Afghanistan and those affected by the terrorist attack in Auckland.



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 the heavenly Father's delight and joy. Amen.