

STORIES OF FAITH

An Uprising of Generosity

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PREPARATION & PRAYER

Thank you Jesus, that even though you were rich, for our sake became poor, so that through Your poverty we might become rich. You are the ultimate example of generosity in action. Please teach us how to become more like you in this area of our lives. Amen.

READING AS A GROUP

As a group, read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 (NLT) aloud, each person reading out a few verses at a time.

REFLECT

Did a particular word or phrase/verse jump out at you?

Take a moment to reflect on it and then share this with the group and why it struck you?

In a couple of weeks Easter will be upon us and is the most foundational part of our story as Christians. So, it makes sense then that we seek to understand this story well as it will shape and inform our lives as followers of Jesus.

Our passage today uses Christ as the ultimate example of giving and generosity but what he has done for us on the cross. He was the One who was rich beyond compare and became poor as any one of us so that we, through him might become rich in love. When we frame it like this in relation to us living generously, all giving is therefore giving back to the One who has already given everything.

Excellence in Christian giving is measured not in dollars by the desire to give – which ultimately stems from gratitude to God.

Recently I came across this news story about impact lockdowns were having on cafes. One café owner shared when in Level 3 things were really quiet and how one customer turned up and asked what the cost of that loss on regular income would've been to their business. The owner estimated about estimated about \$300 a day. The customer pulled out his credit card and paid the cafe \$300 for a cup of coffee. That good deed turned into another. As a result, the café decided to donate the content of their food cabinet to Love Soup, a local food charity. I don't know if guy who bought \$300 coffee is a Christian or not – whether he is or isn't for me isn't the point – the point is he has grasped a key aspect of what generosity looks like in action.

QUESTIONS

1. What experiences of God's generosity and/or provision have you experienced in your life?
2. Have you ever felt prompted to give to someone in your life? What impact did it have on them and you? Share these with the group if appropriate.

ACTION

Choose one person to show generosity to this week using your time, resources, talents, or money and go for it.

REALITY CHECK

Many people have been hit financially by events of the last year during Covid-19. Some of you have lost jobs or are without work currently. The economy is struggling, and these are uncertain times.

What challenges does this pose to cultivating lives of generosity where we are seeking to give away and bless those around us?

The main challenge I see is the understandable temptation and fear to bunker down and become more focused on our needs. That if we share our abundance with others there will not be enough left for us.

As Christians we are called to be agents of transformation and in no arena is this more challenging than in that of financial stewardship.

Do you see this playing out in your own life? If so, how?

How are we seeking to replace fear with trust in this area of our lives?

CLOSING PRAYER

by M. K. W. Heicher:

Disturb me, Lord, when I am too well pleased with myself,

When my dreams have come true because I have dreamed too little,

When I arrived safely because I sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb me, Lord, when with the abundance of things I possess

I have lost my thirst for the waters of life;

Having fallen in love with life, I have ceased to dream of eternity

And in my efforts to build a new earth, I have allowed my vision of the new heaven to dim.

Disturb me, Lord, to dare more boldly,

To venture on wider seas where storms will show your mastery;

Where losing sight of land, I shall find the stars.

I ask You to push back the horizons of my hopes;

And to push into the future in strength, courage, hope, & love.

Amen.