

Generous Disciples

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Welcome to the first in a series of articles focusing on an important aspect of being Disciples of Christ; generosity. But before we get on to that, we need to know what Discipleship is. You may not have known you were a “disciple” until now. The word means learner, and we use it to describe those who want to grow in Christ and in doing so model and teach other Christians about lots of things including the Bible, prayer, doctrine (what Christians believe), relationships, Christian living, service, and worship.

You might think that you’re not cut out for the job and your knowledge of the Christian faith is shaky. Don’t worry. God called you as you are and uses your skills, even ones you didn’t know you had. Every time you pray or you tell a friend that you’re going to church or you explain to a workmate what Lent is all about, you’re being a Disciple. Discipleship is about how we live a distinctly Christian way. It’s about action. God calls us to respond, and when we do, we are being disciples.



Following the teachings of Jesus, and trying as best we can to live like He did, makes us stand out from the crowd for good reasons. When we live as Disciples, our lives are so much richer because we know we are loved deeply and unconditionally, no matter how many mistakes we make along the way. We know we are never alone; we face the world safe in the knowledge that God is with us now and always will be. As Disciples, when we are troubled or scared we can pray and feel a sense of peace from the connection we get with our Father. As Disciples, when we worship together we join in celebrating and praising the wonder of our Lord.

As Disciples, we are incredibly blessed because we have a very generous God whose generosity knows no bounds. We love God because He first loved us, and we give because God first gave to us ***“immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine”*** (Eph 3:20). Our whole lives are a response to a loving, generous God, who gives freely and without measure to the whole world. When we immerse ourselves in the character of God, we come to realise that all that we are, and

all that we have, comes from God's generosity. This concept can be quite surprising and challenging for some of us. We will look at this in more detail in the series.

The well-known Bible verse from John's Gospel beautifully and simply sums this up:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son," (John 3:16)

John shows us that the Biblical concepts of "love" and "gift" are inseparable. In fact it is impossible to understand one without the other. Therefore, because God's love is gifted love, our love must be expressed through giving back as well.

God gave Jesus to the world that through him we might have eternal life, and to have eternal life is to know God in a way that without Jesus it would not be possible. So, as we think about who God is and about His character, the call to be like our heavenly Father challenges us to emulate his generosity. Such love knows no boundaries and will challenge us, as much as it will challenge and bless those around us.

Over this series of articles about Generous Giving we will learn about this key part of our faith and how we respond to God's call. We will look at ways we can change our lives to reflect God's love, and in doing so, change the lives of others. It doesn't matter how long we have been Christians or where we are in our relationship with God. It doesn't matter if we already knew we were Disciples or if we learned that for the first time today. Being nearer God and trying to understand Him is something we all ultimately seek. Giving Generously is a central part of that and when we feel ready to take this step and rethink how we do this, we are changed. It is a beautiful thing. We will see our own lives transformed, our parishes and communities transformed and this special corner of God's Kingdom in the North East of England transformed.

A prayer for transformation

God you know me and all my ways. You knew me before I was born and you gave me life. You are my guide, my shield, my strength. You are my best friend and confidant. You hear my prayers and you comfort me when I am alone. I am not worthy but you give me so much anyway. I thank you with all my heart for your generosity. Please help me, Lord, to consider how I can give more generously. Transform me God. Search my heart and guide me to be more like you. Fill me with joy and peace and love when I give, and remind me that I give because first you gave. Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer.