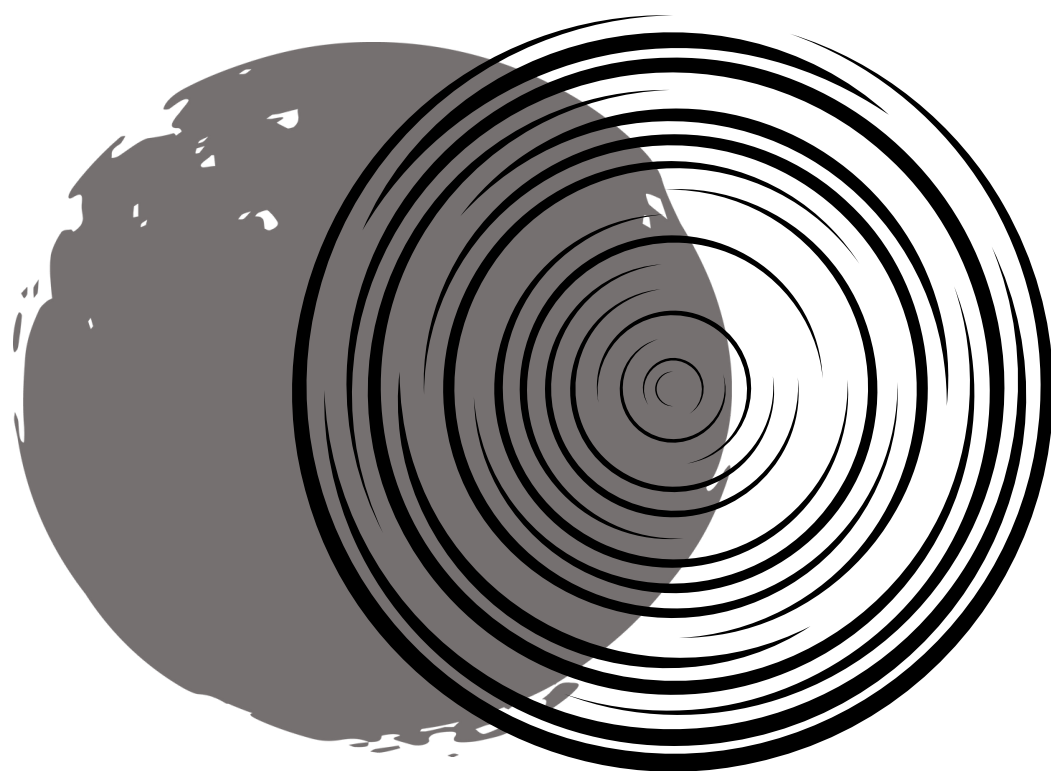


GENEROSITY SERIES

COMMUNITY GUIDE



WELCOME

As context for this series we thought it would be helpful to include a reminder of the discipleship pathway at All Saints. We recognise that people who attend All Saints are at different stages of this pathway on their journey with Jesus. In this series of sermons on Generosity we are focusing on a practical aspect of what it means to be someone who regards All Saints as their spiritual home. There will be some additional pages that will give a simple breakdown of income and expenditure at All Saints. These will be released in the next week or so.

There will be four sermons on this (21st & 28th April and 5th & 12th May). We are aware that because of the APCM (24th April) and Open to God the following week this may limit the number of times some groups can actually meet. So there is one extended study below which gives you the opportunity to explore and discuss as many or as few of the sermons as you have time for.

There is also a section at the end which we would encourage you to do individually and of course, to discuss with your community if you feel that would be helpful. We hope that this will be helpful as you reflect on and review your current approach to giving and serving within the family of All Saints and in response to the incredible generosity of our God.

Community Leader Expectations for this Series:

- Please look through the study and prayerfully decide how much or how little you are going to focus on together.
- To clarify: you may want to do multiple weeks on this study or focus on one or a few aspects that seem relevant to the group you are leading.
- Every Community should do at least one week on this topic.
- If you are stuck, please get in contact:

OUR MISSION:

Living with, like and for Jesus in Hoole, Chester and beyond.

LIVE WITH JESUS:

Deepening personal relationship and connection to him. This is a life of 'encounter' with God through his Holy Spirit.

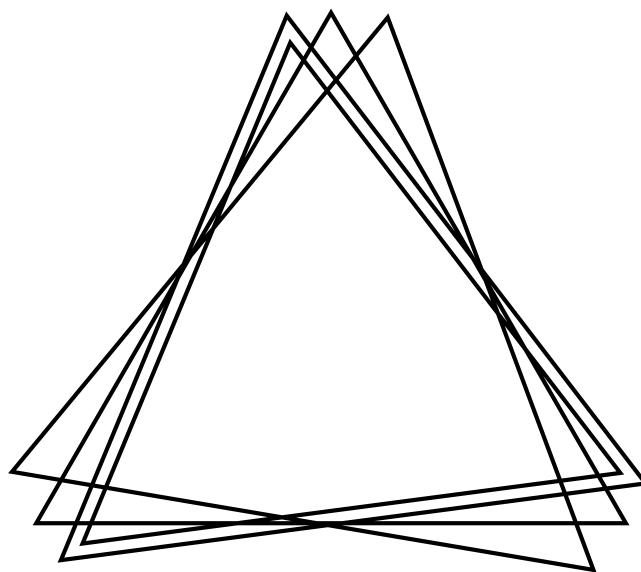
LIVE LIKE JESUS:

Increasingly reflecting his character and lifestyle. This is a life of 'transformation' in the image of Jesus by his Holy Spirit.

LIVE FOR JESUS:

Re-presenting his Good News, in the power of the Spirit, wherever we go. This is a life of 'mission', sent by the Holy Spirit.

live with --- encounter



live for --- mission

like like --- transformation

ALL SAINTS DISCIPLESHIP

PATHWAY

WELCOME:

Whether people are new to God, to faith or simply to our church, they are met by a welcoming and hospitable culture and quickly feel like they belong.

- Sunday services.
- Midweek ministries.
- Alpha Course.
- Welcome lunches.

FAMILY:

People become part of God's family as they become Christians and seek to go deeper with God and learn how to be disciples in community.

- Baptism / Confirmation.
- All Saints Communities.
- Discipleship courses.

4

1

2

ALL SAINTS DISCIPLESHIP

PATHWAY

HOME:

We discover and grow in the gifts we have to share with our church family and the people and places we are called to serve outside the church walls.

- Growing in spiritual gifts.
- Growing in our lifelong callings.
- Serving in a Team.
- Giving Financially.
- Growing in leadership.

3

LAUNCH:

The Good News of Jesus is for everyone. We are committed to play our part in seeking God's renewal of this City.

- New congregations
- New and growing leaders
- Multiplying Communities.
- Church planting.
- Serving our parish and City.

4

ALL SAINTS DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY:

1. WELCOME:

Whether people are new to God, to faith or simply to our church, they are met by a welcoming and hospitable culture and quickly feel like they belong.

- Sunday services.
- Midweek ministries.
- Alpha Course.
- Welcome lunches.

2. FAMILY:

People become part of God's family as they become Christians and seek to go deeper with God and learn how to be disciples in community.

- Baptism / Confirmation.
- All Saints Communities.
- Discipleship courses.

3. HOME:

We discover and grow in the gifts we have to share with our church family and the people and places we are called to serve outside the church walls.

- Growing in spiritual gifts.
- Growing in our lifelong callings.
- Serving in a Team.
- Giving Financially.
- Growing in leadership.

4. LAUNCH:

We are committed to multiply leaders, ministries and even churches to play our part in seeking God's renewal of this City.

- New congregations
- New and growing leaders
- Multiplying Communities.
- Church planting.
- Resourcing and serving our parish and City.

DATES OF SUNDAY SERMONS:

These will be uploaded to our website:
allsaints.church

- Week 1: It's all Grace: Ephesians 2:1-10
- Week 2: Time / Talents / Treasures: Matthew 25:14-30
- Week 3: The Joy of Giving: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
- Week 4: The Heart of Giving: Matthew 6:1-4.

Part of our giving is using our gifts within the church family and we are including an extra gifts questionnaire in case you missed the ones in the study guide earlier this year and also in response to those who felt the ones we suggested there didn't cover some of the practical ways we can serve within our church family.

See supplementary material:

'Using your gifts at All Saints'

PART ONE : IT'S ALL GRACE – EPHESIANS 2:1-10

OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

READ EPHESIANS 2:1-10

HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS INTRO:

It's all too easy for us to approach any mention of giving/money, even using our time and talents for God, with a defensive response and so it's important that we begin this series on generosity by reminding ourselves that 'we are saved by grace'. In his commentary on these verses John Stott says that: 'what Paul does in this passage is to paint a vivid picture of what [we] are by nature and what [we] can become by grace ... We were dead, but have been made spiritually alive ... by grace which is God's free and undeserved mercy towards us.'[1]

[1] John Stott, BST: The Message of Ephesians, IVP 1979

With the events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday so fresh in our minds it is good to remind ourselves that God's gift of grace to us was something which cost him dearly. We can never earn or repay his glorious grace but, as verse 10 reminds us, 'we are created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.'

Tom Wright ends his commentary on these verses by posing a challenging question: 'What happens to people's moral and spiritual lives if they don't grasp the fact that our entire life, never mind our salvation, is God's undeserved gift?'[1]

[1] Tom Wright, Paul for Everyone: Ephesians, SPCK, 2003

HAVE SOMEONE READ THE PASSAGE AND COMMENTS BELOW

1 Chronicles 29:10-14 - King David collects an abundance of supplies and riches but it is amassed in order to build a temple to glorify God. David's attitude is "But who am I, and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand." (v14)

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- What stood out for you as you listened to the sermon on Ephesians 2:1-10 – It's all grace?
- What is your response to Tom Wright's challenging question (above) considered in the light of the passage from 1 Chronicles 29?
- The idea that God is the source of all that we have, earn and own is a challenging one. How does it make you react?
- Is there one thing that you can begin to take action on this week?

If you feel comfortable, share with your community:

- Any examples of how you have struggled to put this into practice?
- Any examples of ways you have put this into practice?

AT THE END OF EACH SESSION SPEND SOME TIME PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER

- Pray for specific issues that have arisen out of the discussion of the material you have covered
- Pray for specific needs which individual members of the community are currently facing. Are there any practical things that you can do to help one another with these needs?

NOTES

PART TWO : TIME, TALENTS, TREASURES: MATT 25:14-30

OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

READ MATT 25:14-30

HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS INTRO:

Whilst many recognise that their primary use of their talents is in their regular everyday job, this does not let us off the hook when it comes to using our talents within and for the benefit of our church family - anymore than being in full-time work or full-time church ministry lets us off contributing our time and talents to our families at home.

A further aspect of using our talents is related to our life stages. There are no hard and fast rules about this and God may and does call us into many ministries regardless of our age, personal circumstances and commitments. This is all part of what Paul calls 'offering our bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1).

Obedying God's call to use the 'talents [God] entrusted you with' may well involve a sacrifice in terms of time, money and personal goals and ambitions; or it may just involve a re-think of practicalities around managing serving and childcare on a Sunday morning for example. And that might well involve another member of the church family stepping in to help. It can be a very helpful and effective way of getting to know people and mixing across age groups.

It might be helpful to ask if there is anyone in the group who has had the experience of hearing and responding to God's call to get involved in a specific ministry or to make a change of direction in some area of their life/service in a church family.

If you didn't get round to doing the gifts questionnaires in the earlier 'This is Church' series back in January, you may like to do the attached SHAPE questionnaire - see the introduction section of this study guide.

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- What stood out to you as you listened to the sermon on 'Time, Talents, Treasures'?
- The parable of the talents reminds us that we all have been given talents. Share with the group what you think your strongest talents are and encourage each other by sharing what talents you see in others in your community.
- It is hard to let go of things that are precious to us unless we are totally convinced of God's abounding love for us and that we will never be short-changed by surrendering ourselves and our treasures to Him. Are there 'treasures' in your life that you would find it difficult to let go of? Why might this be?
- Is there one thing that you can begin to take action on this week?
- If you feel comfortable, share with your community:
- Any examples of how you have struggled to put this into practice
- Any examples of ways you have put this into practice

If, following this session you would find it helpful to talk to someone about serving in a specific role within the church family and you're not sure who to speak to then please, in the first instance, discuss this with your community leaders who will arrange for you to be put in touch with the relevant person. Or contact tina.trevett@allsaints.church and I will put you in touch with the relevant person.

AT THE END OF EACH SESSION SPEND SOME TIME PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER

- Pray for specific issues that have arisen out of the discussion of the material you have covered
- Pray for specific needs which individual members of the community are currently facing. Are there any practical things that you can do to help one another with these needs?

NOTES

PART THREE : THE JOY OF GIVING: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ THESE PASSAGES:

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15; 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15; 1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-4

HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS INTRO:

It is helpful to read this whole section in 2 Corinthians 8-9. Paul is here addressing a specific situation within the church at Corinth regarding their 'collection for God's people [in Jerusalem]' (1 Cor. 16:1, 3) and it's easy to get drawn into the practicalities of what Paul was writing to them about.

And there are some important practical details to be gleaned: Paul is talking about the practicalities of having the collection ready for when he comes; of their making regular offerings; of making practical decisions about how much to give - 'if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has not according to what one does not have' (8:12)

But it is also easy to overlook the theme of 'grace' which underpins these practicalities. Paul Barnett in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 8 writes: 'The charis, the grace of God towards them and also dynamically at work within them, will create charismata, gifts within them, including the gift of giving (see also Romans 12:8)' [1] And Paul writes to the Corinthians 'This service that you perform is not only supplying the need of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.' (2 Cor. 9:12).

The joy of our giving stems from our response to God's grace in giving us new life in Christ.

[1] Paul Barnett, BST, The Message of 2 Corinthians, IVP, 1998

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Questions to discuss in your community
- What stood out to you as you listened to the sermon on 'The Joy of Giving'?
- What do these passages tell us about how we should think about our approach and attitude to giving?
- Discuss some practical ways to apply these principles in our present situations sharing ways that have helped you in the past
- Is there one thing that you can begin to take action on this week?

If you feel comfortable, share with your community:

- Any examples of how you have struggled to put this into practice
- Any examples of ways you have put this into practice

AT THE END OF EACH SESSION SPEND SOME TIME PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER

- Pray for specific issues that have arisen out of the discussion of the material you have covered
- Pray for specific needs which individual members of the community are currently facing. Are there any practical things that you can do to help one another with these needs?

NOTES

PART FOUR : THE HEART OF GIVING: MATTHEW 6:1-4

OPENING PRAYER/ WORSHIP:

Gather around in a comfortable space to pray and worship. You may want to start in silence, listen to a worship track or sing some worship songs together. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead your time together.

ASK SOMEONE TO READ THESE PASSAGES:

MATTHEW 6:1-4; MATTHEW 6:19-24; LUKE 12; 11-21

HAVE SOMEONE READ THIS SUMMARY:

The words of these passages are very familiar to many of us:

‘Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men to be seen by them’.

Matt. 6:1

‘Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth ... but store up for yourself treasures in heaven ... Where your treasure is there your heart will be also.’ Matt. 6:19-21.

Gerard Kelly says of these verses; ‘This is not a choice between live now or live later, so much as an invitation to live differently ... The freedom to choose lifestyle options that are not connected to material, social or cultural success seems to be a hallmark of the Kingdom of God ... It is not the immediate gratification of our material desires that will bring us into full humanity but living out of ... the new humanity to which Jesus has called us, backed by the resources of heaven.’[1]

In Luke 12:15 Jesus says ‘a person’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’ We live in a very materialistic society where we are often judged on our material possessions: the clothes we wear; the cars we drive; the houses we live in. And we in turn often form our judgements and opinions of others in the same way. We often see conformity to society’s opinions and values as being important to giving us status and approval.

[1] Gerard Kelly, Humanifesto, Spring Harvest publications, 2001

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- What stood out to you as you listened to the sermon on 'The Heart of Giving'?
- To what extent do we get drawn into viewing and judging ourselves and others by our society's expectations?
- How do we make practical plans for life, but also keep an eternal perspective?
- How do we decide what is "enough"?
- Is there one thing that you can begin to take action on this week?

If you feel comfortable, share with your community:

- Any examples of how you have struggled to put this into practice
- Any examples of ways you have put this into practice

AT THE END OF EACH SESSION SPEND SOME TIME PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER

- Pray for specific issues that have arisen out of the discussion of the material you have covered
- Pray for specific needs which individual members of the community are currently facing. Are there any practical things that you can do to help one another with these needs?

NOTES

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

Like every discipleship practice, giving generously of our time, gifts and finances towards God's kingdom is a lifelong journey. Whether you are new to this or have been practising this for years, we invite you to keep an open heart to what Jesus is saying to you for this season. There is always room for growth and deeper transformation for those who remain teachable. In light of this, the suggestions below are included at the end of each part of our study and we encourage you to continue to reflect on these long after the study is finished.

Some questions and suggestions to help us work out what putting the spiritual practice of generosity into practice in our lives this might look like for each of us whatever our life stage and circumstances:

We live in a world where we are constantly bombarded with advertising that tells us we deserve more, that 'we're worth it'.

- How do we make practical plans for life, but also keep an eternal perspective? How do we decide what is "enough"?
- Do we need to review our financial affairs?

Suggestion: Try to keep a record of your spending over the next few weeks - not the day-to-day bills and basic groceries, but your discretionary spending - a coffee here, a treat there, etc. ... What do these add up to? Did anything surprise you about how you spent your money?

What first steps can we take following on from this sermon series to ensure that God, not money (either as a worry or a lifestyle choice) is our priority? Gerard Kelly suggests a couple of further practical actions:

- Rest your eyes: For a month make a habit of leaving the room or switching your TV off whenever adverts are on. After a month, check if your spending habits have changed. I guess this needs to be updated (2001 was very much pre-24 hour screen time) and I would suggest that you apply this to whatever devices/apps you regularly use. Mute the ads/limit your scrolling time/fast from distracting social media.

This next one links to our recent focus on the practice of solitude:

Take a retreat: take time out to re-assess the priorities of your life. Examine where it is that you are investing time, energy and resources. This will vary with our age and stage of life but it is easy to get so caught up in the busyness of life that we neglect to stop, take stock and ask God whether He has something for us that we might be missing.

For me this has at various times involved: reducing hours of work; leaving paid work; going back to study; moving house and church; being given new opportunities for paid work and service which wouldn't have otherwise happened.

That was my pattern - not yours - but if I hadn't taken time to stop and listen I might well have missed out on some wonderful opportunities to serve.

You may find it helpful to use the following as prompts for prayer

- Give thanks for all I have gained through following Jesus

Pray for:

- a deep desire to follow Jesus, come what may
- growing trust that God will supply all that I really need
- certainty that I can never out-give God
- a God-honouring attitude to my possessions
- a willingness to let go of ...
- a willingness to share ...

FURTHER RESOURCES FOR GOING DEEPER

Books / Audio Books

The Treasure Principle

Randy Alcorn

Giving is the Good Life

Randy Alcorn

Counterfeit Gods

Timothy Keller

Know your Spiritual Gifts

Mark Stibbe

What's so Amazing about Grace?

Philip Yancey

'God has the power to provide you with more than enough of every kind of grace. That way, you will have everything you need always and in everything to provide more than enough for every kind of good work.'

2 Corinthians 9v8