

A community that is generous

Readings 2 Corinthians 9: 6-11 & Luke 6: 37-38, 41-42

'You don't have to be rich to be generous' is a well-known slogan, and it is true in one sense, but it fails to capture the true essence of generosity. It is richness in the fruits of the Spirit that demands generosity. Love, kindness, goodness and self-control and more (see Galatians 5: 22) are imparted to us by the Holy Spirit so that through us we can exhibit Christ's love for all and concern for all who are in need in any way. So, it is also true that you need to be rich to be generous.

Read 2 Corinthians 9: 6-11

1. There is a sense in this passage that acts of generosity, perhaps generous generosity, will increase our understanding of just how generous God is.

1a. We may or may not be materially rich, but how many other ways can you name of measuring 'richness'?

1b. How would you explain verses 10 and 11 to your neighbours?

1c. Verse 6. You give money and you can expect money back. Is that how it works? Explain.

2. God loves a cheerful giver (verse 7). It is better to give than to receive is another well-known slogan.

2a. Can anyone in the group recount how true this has been for them?

2b. Give some thought to this – one reason we are to be generous to those with little or nothing is that our generous generosity will enable them/give them the opportunity to share. Does this relate to question 2a? Are there any examples you can give?

Read Luke 6: 37-38 & 41-42

3. How do you decide what you should give; how much is generous? Many would say that the principle of tithing is a good place to start (see Deuteronomy 14: 22-29). The principle of tithing has two facets (1) give to God first (2) give 10% of your everything (which, of course, God has first given you).

3a. Time is precious. Give to God first. Assuming we need to sleep for 8 hours each day, that leaves 16 hours available – of which 10% is about 1.5 hrs – say 11 hours each week. To whom will you/do you offer this time?

3b. How does or where does prayer time/time with God fit into tithing?

3c. There is debate about how to calculate the 10% when it comes to money. Should the 10% be calculated from your gross income, or income minus taxes, or after both taxes and cost of living have been deducted? What do you think God is saying?

3d. Note (verse 37) the reminder about judgement. How do you avoid condemning those with whom you disagree?