

Learning to Trust *Discipleship from Wilderness to Kingdom*

1. God's Provision: Can it be trusted?

Gratitude & Generosity - A Kingdom of Plenty

2 Corinthians 8.1-15

Aim: To consider to what extent we are a generous people and how we might most effectively show generosity as a response to God's generous grace towards us.

To start with:

EITHER: What is the best or most surprising gift you've been given? Why did it mean so much to you?

OR: Share the story of a time when God's generosity really surprised or blessed you.

Engaging with the text:

Read 2 Corinthians 8.1-15

- Summarise what you understand is going on in this passage - what is the 'story' behind these verses as far as you can tell?

Background Info:

Paul has been taking a collection from amongst the gentile churches for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem - it seems that this may have stalled a bit, but here Paul is encouraging them to bless other Christians who they have never met and using the Macedonian believers as role-models in generosity.

- What do you think tends to:
 - Motivate people to be generous in general? (e.g. Who do you think people tend to give to and why?)
 - Prevent generosity?
 - What reasons does Paul give for the Corinthian church to give generously? (v. 7,8,9,11, and 14 may help if you get stuck)
 - Which of these reasons would motivate you to give generously, and why?
- Look again at verse 9. What did Jesus' 'generous acts' (grace) actually look like? How easy do you find it to follow his example of generosity, and why do you think that is?
- There is so much need in the world, and the phrase 'compassion fatigue' is used to describe people's reluctance to give as they are asked repeatedly to help a thousand worthy causes! As God's people how might we decide where to give?

(NB. If it seems appropriate you might ask people to give examples of what they give to and why they made that choice. Don't ask them to say how MUCH they give, that's probably not helpful.)

Re-read v14 and also Acts 2.44-45 and Acts 4.33-35

- To what extent is this lifestyle appropriate and realistic for us in the 21st Century?
- 'Those who have a surplus, however small, should share it with those who have nothing, as an elementary expression of their faith'*

How far do you agree with this statement, and why/why not?



7.
 - a. If we, as a congregation, lived as described in v.14 what might it look like practically? What are the challenges we face in making sure that there are 'no needy persons among us'?
 - b. What do you think would be an appropriate step for you to take in following Jesus' example and becoming more generous?