

1) A GOD OF GENEROSITY

Our God is a generous, giving God! The generosity of God is one of the most elemental ways we come to know God's love because God has graciously bestowed on God's children all good things. The gift of creation. The gift of life itself. The material bounty of the earth. Everything we have is a gift from God. And beyond the material blessings and gifts, God gives spiritual gifts of love, faith, grace, forgiveness, and the greatest gift of all – the gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ. All of these are examples of God's grace, God's generosity.

GOD'S GENEROSITY IN SCRIPTURE

When we read scripture with an eye towards the generous nature of God, we discover that God uses generosity to bring forth abundance in order to usher in the Kingdom of God.

- ☐ The Miracle of Loaves and Fishes. Jesus asks his disciple Philip, *"Where are we to buy bread for these people (5000+) to eat?"* Philip protests and saying, *"even six months' wages couldn't buy enough bread for such a large crowd."* The disciple Andrew sees a boy in the crowd with five barley loaves and two fish. Jesus takes the boy's meager offering, gives thanks, and gives it to the crowd. After everyone is fed, there is enough left to fill 12 baskets. **(John 6:1-14).**
- ☐ Birds, Lilies and People. Jesus teaches that a God who feeds the sparrows and adorns the lilies of the field, will unfailing care for us, even more so **(Matthew 6:25-34).**
- ☐ The Prodigal Son. In this story, the Father (God) shows extraordinary gestures of generosity and lavishes generosity on his son, a sinner. In this story God's generosity is an instrument of God's mercy and grace and a part of God's work of salvation. **(Luke 15:11-32)**
- ☐ The Parables of the great banquet **(Luke 14:15-24)** and the laborers in the vineyard **(Matthew 20:1-16)** are other stories of God's extreme generosity.

REFLECTION

- ☐ Which of the stories mentioned above do you think demonstrates God's generosity the most? (You can add your own scripture passage as well)
- ☐ What other scripture stories would you add to these that demonstrate God's generous nature toward humanity?
- ☐ Do you have your own story? A time in life when God's generosity provided for you in a moment when it appeared that there would not be enough. Would you be willing to share that with the group?

2) A PEOPLE OF GENEROSITY WHO REFLECT THE IMAGE AND NATURE OF GOD

Because humankind is created in God's image, we are created to be generous as God is generous. God created us to reflect the image of God within us and to participate in God's generosity. Giving is a part of our spiritual DNA. Generosity is also part of the DNA of the Church as well. God created the Church to reflect and embody God's divine generosity. The Church is not the recipient of our Christian generosity, but rather the Church is an agent of spreading God's generosity throughout the world.

GOD'S GENEROUS PEOPLE IN SCRIPTURE

- ☐ **Genesis 1:27**, *"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them."*
- ☐ **Acts 2:42-47**, *"⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*
- ☐ **James 2:15-17**, *"¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."*

REFLECTION

- ☐ Are there other scriptures that demonstrate the generous nature of God's people?
- ☐ In your own words, what does it mean to you that you have been *"created in God's own image?"*
- ☐ In our membership vows we share before God and the church, we pledge as members of Christ's universal Church *"to do all in our power to strengthen its ministries,"* and *"to faithfully participate in its ministries by our prayers, presence, gifts, service and our witness."* Which of these ways of commitment *"strengthening and participating"* are easiest for you? Which are more difficult? Would you be willing to share why?
- ☐ Describe a time when you witnessed in yourself, or others, the generous nature of God's people that went beyond the local church.
- ☐ What barriers and obstacles keep us from reflecting God's generosity in our own lives?

CLOSING THOUGHT

- ☐ As we consider our *Next Faithful Step*, a quote from Rev. Bill Esau, *"The love of God only comes to us on its way to someone else. If it stops with us, then it wasn't the love of God."*