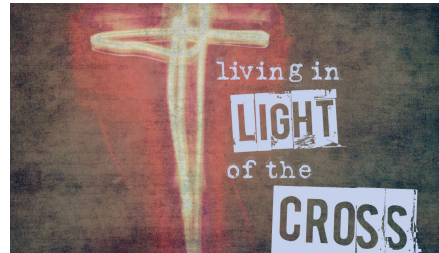


Living in light of the Cross #4

In this short series at MR we'll be considering what the cross says about our discipleship. Each week we'll consider a passage and how it relates to a different aspect of following Jesus.



Overview of 2 Corinthians 8v1-9...

This week we were thinking about giving and money. In our uncertain financial climate, it's an important topic to consider and one that Jesus often spoke about. What we spend our money on and how much we give, is a window into the state of our hearts. We said the situation that Paul was writing about was narrow and specific (namely a collection for the poor Jerusalem church (Ro 15)) and yet the principles were wide and universal. Those principles were:

1. Generous giving out of extreme poverty...v1-4

Paul holds up for the Corinthian church, the example of the poorer, persecuted Macedonian church who have given generously despite their extreme poverty (see v2). This is not what we expect - we expect people to give less if they are poorer (as per a reduction in charitable giving in 2011). Not so for the Macedonians.

2. Generous giving out of authentic discipleship...v5-7

The Macedonians were generous because they gave *themselves*. Rather than the accountant mindset that asks 'How much do you need?' 'How much in the red are we?' The Macedonians simply gave what they could - giving themselves first of all to the Lord and then to Paul. In v7 Paul also urges the church in Corinth to make sure their giving matches the level of their other gifts. To 'excel' in the grace of giving.

3. Generous giving out of the example of the Cross...v8-9

The final, and perhaps greatest principle for giving is to look to the example of the cross and see Christ's amazing generosity to us: v9 sums it up. Jesus, the ultimate 'rich man' becomes poor so that we might become rich as are given a relationship with the God who made us. With this kind of a God, how could we ever be stingy?

Here are some possible thoughts and questions. Please be selective and adapt them for your group:

Possible Questions

Do you find it easy to be a generous Christian?

v1-4

How does Paul describe the Macedonian Christians?
Why does he describe them at all to the Corinthians?
How does their example challenge us?
Do we want to be like them?

v5-7

What does it mean to be a disciple?
What is the next principle for giving that Paul outlines for us?
How do we 'rate' gifts and churches? What do we think of giving? Does it matter to us?
Do you think we excel in the grace of giving?

v8-9

What would you say to a non-Christian who says Christians are 'just after my money!!'?
What principle does Paul outline finally (and maybe most importantly) from v9?
What would you say to a stingy Christian who finds it hard to be generous? Knowing that there are always reasons not give, do you find it easy to be generous? Why / why not?

What 2 things can you take away from this study? Share them with the group and pray for each other.