

## **Generosity Gift and Grace**

### **Course Members' Materials**

Generosity, Gift and Grace are qualities of the nature and character of God. His generosity is revealed in creation, His grace is fully revealed in Jesus and His gift of new life is made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit. Our giving is our response to this generosity, gift and grace of God

This course contains five sessions, each considering a different aspect of generosity. It aims to be practical and enjoyable whilst encouraging us to think more deeply about how we respond to the generosity, gift and grace of God.

Session 1 – Generous God

Session 2 – Generous People – Serving God with our time and talents

Session 3 – Generous Giving – Serving God through our use of money

Session 4 – Generosity towards others – Letting our faith shape our lives

Session 5 – The bigger picture – Sharing and supporting

The course pack contains a DVD with films for each session and a CD-Rom so you can print out materials for leaders and members. These will also be available from the diocesan website [www.blackburn.anglican.org](http://www.blackburn.anglican.org).

DVD 1:1



**Exercise: The nature of God**

Look at the list of words that different parts of the bible use to describe God and circle up to three that strike you as particularly powerful or surprising.



**Abundant, Almighty, Alpha (Beginning),  
Blessing, Builder, Creator, Equipper,  
Everlasting, Generous, Giver, Grace,  
Kind, King, Judge, LORD, Love,  
Majestic, Merciful, Mighty,  
Omega (End), Poor, Providing,  
Redeemer, Renewing, Rescuer,  
Rich, Righteous, Saving, Sovereign, Tireless,  
Trustworthy, Understanding, Unfathomable**



**Bible: Psalm 8**

Read Psalm 8 aloud together and then read it again. Share together any phrase that struck you.

- <sup>1</sup> LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory  
in the heavens.
- <sup>2</sup> Through the praise of children and infants  
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.
- <sup>3</sup> When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,
- <sup>4</sup> what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?
- <sup>5</sup> You have made them a little lower than the angels  
and crowned them with glory and honour.
- <sup>6</sup> You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their feet:
- <sup>7</sup> all flocks and herds,  
and the animals of the wild,
- <sup>8</sup> the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea,  
all that swim the paths of the seas.
- <sup>9</sup> LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

**DVD 1:2**



**School pets**

It's often said that “to fail to plan is to plan to fail”.

In the creation story, we see that God planned to make man and that he put him in the garden to “take care of it” (Genesis 2:15).






*Imagine you're back at school and you've been chosen to look after the class goldfish/hamster. What would you need to do?*

*Have a group discussion to see just what would be involved to make sure the goldfish/hamster returns to the class ALIVE at the start of term.*



**Our responsibilities**

As stewards of all that God has given us, what are our responsibilities for the world, the church and people?

	My responsibilities for the world include:
	My responsibilities for the local and worldwide church include:
	My responsibilities for other people include:



**Prayer: (2 minutes)**

Join in praying the Giving Generously prayer.

**Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power,  
the glory, the splendour, and the majesty;  
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.  
All things come from you,  
and of your own do we give you. Amen.**



**Take Away activity: (1 minute)**

Until you next meet, try to notice when you see people being generous and give thanks for that person's generosity and for Creator God, the source of our generosity.



Prayer:

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power,  
the glory, the splendour, and the majesty;  
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.  
All things come from you,  
and of your own do we give you. Amen.

DVD 2:1



Bible: Romans 12 1-8



**12** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

*<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup>For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup>We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; <sup>7</sup>if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup>if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

Worship v 1-2

- What ideas does Paul use to describe our offering of worship? What do you make of these?

Service v 3-8

- Paul uses the image of a body to describe the church. Why do you think he uses this image?
- When our physical bodies don't work, we often take steps to put things right. How can we ensure that the church works well as a body?
- Do you think any gifts are more important than others? You might like to discuss your responses.



**Round or square pegs?**

We know that in church, as in family life, there are things that just have to get done, but as part of God's family, how are we making sure we make the best use of every part of the body and each gift?

- Tick the "Good Fit" column if you're doing it and it's a good fit. (there are some blank lines if what you do isn't on the list or just cross something out and write at the side)
- Tick the "Bad Fit" column if you're doing the role and you feel it's not your thing – it's frustrating and you feel like a 'square peg in a round hole'.

If you're not involved but feel God prompting you to have a go, tick the "Have a Go" column.

	What we do	How I feel about this role		
		Good Fit	Bad Fit	Have a go
<b>Helping people feel welcome and cared for</b>	Welcomer/Sidesperson			
	Refreshments			
	Pastoral Care			
<b>Preparing for worship</b>	Cleaning rota			
	Arranging flowers			
<b>Helping make worship happen</b>	Reading bible in services			
	Leading intercessions			
	Occasional preacher/Service leader/Reader			
	Organist/choir/Musician/singer			
	Sound desk/Audio Visual			
	Servers/ Preparing linen			
	Bread/wafers and wine available/laid out			
<b>Helping people find and grow in faith</b>	Sunday School/Children's/Youth work			
	Leading study or enquirers groups			
	Planning faith sharing events			
	Personal faith sharing			
<b>Enabling Ministry</b>	Warden/Treasury/Secretary			
	Parish Safeguarding Officer			
	PCC Member			
	Helping with administration			
	Helping with website			
	Helping with Facebook			
	Preparing Notice sheets			
<b>Practical and necessary</b>	Maintenance			
	Gardening			
<b>Serving the local and worldwide community</b>	School assemblies/governor			
	Local community groups			
	Serving others			
	Foodbank/Foodmarket			
	Community project groups			
	Social justice			

DVD 2:2



**Serving God on our Frontline**








Your Frontline is the place where you spend the majority of your time outside the church, the place where you are in contact with non-Christians.

Your personal Frontline could be your workplace, your home, or your neighbourhood and might change from one year to the next.

Wherever it is, there will be people there who are loved by God and situations where God might use you to make a difference. Just as no two people are the same, no two person's frontlines will be identical. Whether you are young or old, in paid employment or not, sick or well, you will have your own Frontline.

What gifts and skills has God given you that you can see you are already using or could start to use as you live out your faith on your Front Line.

	Where do you spend most of your time?
	Where do you connect with people outside church?
	Where is your front line?
	What gifts and skills has God given you that you can see you are using as you live out your faith on your Front Line.
	How might God be asking you to serve him on your Front Line?



**Prayer: (3 minutes)**

Spend some moments in silence reflecting on the sheets from the two exercises. You might like to play some quiet music in the background.

Listen to the following verses

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. <sup>5</sup>In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup>We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. **Romans 12:1,2,5,6a***



**Take Away activity: (1 minute)**

Encourage course members to reflect on the gifts and skills that God has given them and how they are using them to serve God as part of the body.

If people would like to spend more time exploring their Gifts, then there is a 6-session course 'Shaped for God's Purpose' that can be downloaded from the Blackburn Diocesan Website. Other Gifts and Skills audits are available, and your church leader may be able to recommend one to you





**Prayer:**

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power,  
the glory, the splendour, and the majesty;  
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.  
All things come from you,  
and of your own do we give you. Amen.



**The Price is Right**

Each week and month we choose how to spend some of our money.

If you chose to treat yourself to some of these things next week, how much would you expect to pay?

Fish and Chips	£
Cinema ticket	£
Coffee in town	£
Bottle of wine from the supermarket	£
Pint of beer in the pub	£
Ticket to your local football team	£
Holiday	£
The Mona Lisa	£



DVD 3:1



**Bible: 2 Corinthians 9 6-10 (20 minutes)**

*<sup>6</sup> Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written:*

*‘They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;  
their righteousness endures for ever.’*

*<sup>10</sup> Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.*

*<sup>11</sup> You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*

After the passage has been read, ask the group for any immediate comments or thoughts about the passage. Then consider the following questions:

- We’re used to charity appeals on TV and in the press. Which charities are your friends and family the most likely to give to and why?
- When Paul talks about the sower, what does this illustration show us about giving?
- What is your reaction to verse 8? How might this apply to someone who has problems with debt? Does this mean that all wealthy people have been blessed by God?
- From the passage what suggestions are made to help us decide how to give? What are some benefits of generous giving?

**DVD 3:2**



**St Elsewhere’s**

Here are some (made up!) descriptions of people. In threes, look at the scenarios and, for each one, answer the following questions:



1. How do you think they are currently deciding how much to give to their church?
2. Based on the principles we have been looking at in this session, what factors do you think they should consider? What would be an amount for them to give each week (or month)?

**Max A Million**

Max is a successful businessman aged 55 with a string of businesses and a lifestyle to match. As the children have now left home, he and his wife make sure that they attend all the society events in the county and hosts a big party for all his staff once a year. The rest of the year is punctuated by holidays (skiing in February and a cruise in the Autumn), and he and his wife eat out on a Friday or Saturday if they haven't got a function to attend. He supports the local church (along with other local charities) and he and his wife have a joint standing order for £50 per month.

**Justin Case**

Justin is now divorced and in his 40s. He attends his local church from time to time, (if he hasn't got something else that he needs to do) and likes to think that it will be there for his funeral. He has a management position at the local council and enjoys watching football (he's a season ticket holder) and having a few beers with his colleagues on a Friday night. He always thinks that when he retires, he might have time to go to church more often as he finds the people very welcoming. However, he doesn't really understand what the church does with the money that people put in the offering plate (it's the Church of England so surely the government pays for the clergy), but he usually puts a few pound coins into the plate when he's there – after all, they give him coffee and biscuits at the end.

**Penny Checker**

Penny is a young mum with three children and they have been coming along to the local church for about 18 months, following an invitation to Messy Church. The children enjoy Sunday School, and she has started to make friends with some of the other parents. Though Penny's husband doesn't come with her, he's happy for her and the children to be out on a Sunday morning leaving him in peace with the Sunday papers and it avoids her paying to entertain the children at the local soft play centre. Following the birth of baby number three, Penny hasn't gone back to work because of the high costs of childcare, and they are struggling with the mortgage in their terraced house. Penny doesn't give any money in the Sunday offering but has started to help with the food and washing up at Messy Church.

**Widow S Mite**

Widow has been a faithful member of the same church all her life, having been christened as a baby, confirmed, married and seeing her own children christened and married there. Her husband had worked in the local engineering foundry and she had some part time jobs when her children had grown up, but never earned enough to have her own pension. Having been widowed five years ago, she spends time ensuring that the church building is welcoming, preparing flowers and cleaning the brass. She doesn't pay tax but uses planned giving envelopes and has recently increased her giving to £10 per week after hearing a talk about giving 10% to the local church.



**Prayer: (3 minutes)**

John Wesley worked out how much he needed to live on, and he gave away the rest. In the beginning, he had very little income and he started off not really giving away very much. However, by the end of his life he had money coming in from absolutely everywhere, and he still lived on the amount of money he needed and therefore he gave more and more away.

God knows us better than we know ourselves and understands that all our circumstances are different and therefore our giving will be different.

*For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. (2 Corinthians 8:12).*

**In the second film clip the presenters suggested some ways of deciding whether you are giving generously**

- When I look at my giving in relation to my income, is the percentage I'm giving away realistic?
- Does my giving in all its forms have an impact on my lifestyle? Can I identify an element of sacrifice to my giving?
- Is my giving a priority from what I receive each week or each month, rather than what's left over?
- If what I give away was given back to me, would it make a real difference to me? Would I notice?

Spend some time reflecting on how you decided to give the amount you presently give and ask God to show you any changes he is calling you to make as you live a life of generosity, gift and grace.



**Take Away activity: (1 minute)**

In the members' booklet, spend some time reflecting on the steps in giving as we grow as disciples. Ask God to show you where you are, and, as you grow as his disciple, what the next steps are that he is calling you to take.



**Prayer:**

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power,  
the glory, the splendour, and the majesty;  
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.  
All things come from you,  
and of your own do we give you. Amen.





**DVD 4:1**



**Generosity**

Think about what they have just heard and consider how generous you are towards the following groups:



Family	Friends	Strangers	People I don't like
			

On your own, put a number into each rice bowl to indicate (where 5 is extremely generous and 1 is not generous at all)

**Bible: Matthew 18 21-35 (20 minutes)**

Ask a member of the group to read out the passage, you may like to ask someone in advance to avoid putting someone on the spot!



**Matthew 18 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)**

<sup>23</sup> 'Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

<sup>26</sup> 'At this the servant fell on his knees before him. "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay back everything." <sup>27</sup> The servant's master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.

<sup>28</sup> 'But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded.

<sup>29</sup> 'His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay it back."

<sup>30</sup> 'But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

<sup>32</sup> 'Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" <sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

<sup>35</sup> 'This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

After the passage has been read, ask the group for any immediate comments or thoughts about the passage. Then consider the following questions:

- Describe the character of the two servants in the story
- What do you think motivated the King to cancel the debt?
- How did the other servants feel when the servant owing 100 silver coins was thrown into prison?
- What caused this reaction?
- If the king in the story is representative of God, what might this passage show us about the nature and character of God?

#### DVD 4:2



#### Making a difference



In the film we heard the story from Matthew 25 v 31-46 about how at the day of judgement, Jesus will separate people into two categories. The story shows us that, as Jesus lives in us and our hearts are transformed by him we should care for others

<sup>37</sup> 'Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you ill or in prison and go to visit you?"

<sup>40</sup> 'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

In groups of three or four, think of ways in which you (on your own or through your church) can show generosity towards others. You may like to share examples of things you are already doing and what you might like to do?

There are some ideas listed below and space for your own suggestions

Supporting your local foodbank or  
soup kitchen or homeless shelter  
Volunteering with groups helping  
refugees or asylum seekers  
Random acts of kindness – doing  
something good for other people  
Praying regularly for a particular  
organisation or person or supporting  
them financially

Becoming a “place of Welcome” –  
offering a free brew and a listening ear  
Campaigning for justice on national or  
international issues  
Supporting Street Pastors  
  
Other .....



**Prayer: (3 minutes)**

Spend some time thinking back to the stories in this session and how they encourage us to be generous – just as God is generous to each of us

Listen to these words from Luke 6:38

*<sup>38</sup> Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.'*



**Take Away activity: (1 minute)**

We can make a difference in the lives of others by committing to pray for them, choosing to act generously towards them, or by deciding to campaign for them. Our attitudes towards others can be generous if we choose - it's a choice we can all make.

Ask God to show you how he is calling you to show generosity towards other in the way you live out your faith this week.



**Prayer:**

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power,  
the glory, the splendour, and the majesty;  
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.  
All things come from you,  
and of your own do we give you. Amen.

**DVD 5.1**



**True or False Quiz**

Below are a series of statements. Some of them are true, some are false, and some are opinions that people may hold but you might not agree with. As a group, see what you know about how the Church of England and your local church are financed and why money matters.

1. It's the Church of England so English Heritage pay for the upkeep of all church buildings and the government pays the clergy like civil servants
2. The Church of England is a large landowner and the income from that should be enough to provide a good income to pay for all our clergy
3. Cathedrals are not funded from Parish Share
4. Jesus talked about money more than he talked about prayer.
5. I don't mind paying for things in my local church, but we have to pay parish share to the diocese, and we don't see anything back in the parish in respect of the payments we make to the diocese
6. Parish share helps maintain the parish system which put a Christian presence from the Church of England into every community
7. If churches don't have enough income, it's more appropriate to try to do some fundraising than to teach about giving because talking about giving will upset people and drive them away.
8. I am a hardworking church officer, giving loads of time to my church and therefore do not feel that I should be asked to give money as well





**Bible: Matthew 12: 46-50**

*<sup>46</sup> While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. <sup>47</sup> Someone told him, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.'*

*<sup>48</sup> He replied to him, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' <sup>49</sup> Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. <sup>50</sup> For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'*

After the passage has been read, ask the group for any immediate comments or thoughts about the passage.

Then consider the following questions:

- How does Jesus describe those who do God's will?
- Why is this surprising?
- What might this passage show us about our relationship to other Christians? How does this affect our attitudes to them?

**DVD 5.2**





**We are Family**

Though we can function well as individual churches, there are times when we need some additional help or advice.

Below is a list of just some of the support and advice that can be obtained from Diocesan Offices. This list is not exhaustive – there is a wide range of help and advice available from the team at Diocesan Offices and from the Diocesan Website.

Underline the ones you knew about and put a \* next to all those you think your church has used in the last 2 years.

Advertised an event in the 'What's On' section of the website

Churchwarden Training

Diocesan Advisory Committee/Faculty advice for buildings

Diocesan Children's Advisor

Diocesan Registry

Diocesan Vision Course

Diocesan Website

Diocesan Youth Advisor

GDPR training

Graveyard advice

Mission/Vision Action Planning

Parish Finance and Mission Returns

Parish Resources Website

PCC secretary handbook

Publications

Reader Training

Routes of Faith

Safeguarding training for lay people

Safeguarding training for clergy

Seen what's happening in the 'What's On' pages of the website

Small Group Training

Stewardship advice

Training and study courses

Treasurer Training

Vocations support (lay and ordained)

DVD 5.3



Prayer:



*<sup>29</sup> When the offerings were finished, the king and everyone present with him knelt down and worshipped. 2 Chronicles 29:29*

We've seen over the last few weeks how God generously provides for us and asks us to live generously for him, but our first response is to worship Him.

We pray together

**Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power,  
the glory, the splendour, and the majesty;  
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.  
All things come from you,  
and of your own do we give you. Amen.**



Having used these last five sessions to reflect on God's generosity and how we can use our time, talents and money to serve him, look back at the Take it Away sessions and ask God to guide you as you try to live a life of generosity, gift and grace, giving generously of your time, talents and money to the cause of Christ.