

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: Living Like Jesus

The start of a new year is full of possibility; places to travel, goals to achieve, changes to make, new habits to create. There is a steady buzz from our world and culture that says you can live your best life *now* if only you buy this certain program or follow these 5 easy steps. And that noise grows even louder this time of year.

What if instead of asking, what can I achieve this year, we ask, how can I be more like Jesus? Join us this January as we explore different values of Jesus as revealed in the gospels and focus the new year on one simple goal: to live and to love like Jesus.

Message description:

We were created in the image of a generous God. Jesus reveals this generosity to us through his own love, sacrifice, and grace. Therefore, out of this abundance and gratitude, we are called to live the same radical generosity of Christ! Living this value of Jesus will call us out of our own pride, greed, and anxiety to keep or hoard to see that generosity is fun, contagious, and freeing. On our journey toward holiness, it will be the grace of Jesus Christ that transforms our hearts to a spirit of generosity and love for others, our neighbors, and the poor.

Key Scriptures

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. What keeps you from being more generous right now?
2. How have you experienced the truth that generosity is fun? Larry Stoess notes from a friend, "you can't out-give God, but it sure is fun trying!" When has this been your experience?
3. Who is a model of Jesus-like generosity in your life?
4. Did you learn anything new from the context of 2 Corinthians and the importance of "the collection" to Paul's message of the gospel?
5. How can we as a church grow in generosity and continue "to remember the poor"?

Going Deeper:

Read Mark 12:13-17 *Questions for reflection taken from "Think Red" by Larry Stoess, pgs. 72-73

"In this passage, a group of Pharisees set out to trap Jesus in a chargeable offense. Their intent was to have him admit that he did not pay imperial tax to Caesar. Mark notes that Herodias, the wife of Herod Antipas the tetrarch of Galilee, was in the group. This Herodias was the one who conspired with her daughter to arrange the execution of John the Baptist. To refute their accusation, Jesus looks at a coin and ask the question, 'Whose image is this? And whose inscription?' He then declares, 'Give back to Cesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.' Jesus makes a distinction between the empires of this world and the kingdom of God. He makes it clear that each realm inscribes its image on the resources and the economic processes that belong to it."

- Whose image in on the people, places, and things around you? Where do you see the image of God? Where do you see the inscription of the Empire?
 - o In yourself:
 - o In your neighborhood:
 - o In your faith community:
- The empires of this world operate on scarcity and greed. The kingdom of God operates on abundance and generosity. Where do you see these two narratives being lived out?
 - o In yourself:
 - o In your neighborhood:
 - o In your faith community:
- Take some time and make a list of assets around you in your life, neighborhood, and faith community... challenge yourself to add things that you may have overlooked in the past. Some of the things you have considered liabilities can become assets when placed in the hands of a generous and creative God. How can we leverage these assets to move towards generosity that looks more like Jesus?

Pray and Reflect:

"God is always trying to give good things to us, but our hands are too full to receive them." – St. Augustine

- Reflect on this for a few moments.
- Where do you see this lived out in your life, city, and faith community, with hands too full [or schedules, accounts, etc.] that we are not able to receive what we truly need?
- What do you sense God calling you to let go of today (some of the lesser important things) so that you can joyfully receive the things of the kingdom?

Consider participating in this posture prayer by Danielle Strickland, a prayer for transformation into postures of surrender, generosity, and welcome.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1325031461298672>

- What spoke to you about this posture prayer?
- What do you need to surrender today? What do you need to receive today?
- How does this posture prayer speak to our understanding of Wesleyan salvation of transformation into and growth into holiness over time? How does this prayer speak to how we can be transformed into the postures of Christ in our lives?
- What values of Jesus to you hear her address in this prayer?