



**ENTER** God's presence

**Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands... Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever. Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous. Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.** - Psalm 112:1,3-5

Heavenly Father, we encounter interruptions on a daily basis. Often these interruptions frustrate us and our efforts to make our lives better or easier. But we invite you now to interrupt our lives with your Word. We ask that through it, you would remind us of your generosity towards us and of your desire that we would allow your gifts to flow through us to others. Amen.



**SHARE** life together

1. **Share your highs and lows with each other?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **Are you a meticulous planner or do you prefer spontaneity? How do you react when your plans are interrupted?**
4. **What is the best 'unexpected' or 'unplanned' thing that has ever happened to you? How did it come about?**

Do you remember the "Snickers Ad campaign over the last decade? "You are not you when you're hungry." Are you prone to becoming 'hangry'? Or irritable, or impatient, or easily annoyed. How do you react when your plans are interrupted? How do you respond when someone asks you for something that is more than you think you can give or more than you think they deserve? Deliberate discipleship is asking Jesus to deepen our trust and dependence on him and be present with compassion however life unfolds. It is asking Jesus to use us as he pleases for the purposes of his kingdom at whatever cost. It is asking Jesus to empty us of our plans and intentions to serve the immediate needs of those right before us. As Jesus works in us we discover that God meets our needs in the most unexpected ways for whenever there is less self and more sacrifice, God promises that there is always an abundance for all. We'll explore that today.

Week beginning:  
Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Worship series:  
**Addition via Subtraction:  
Deliberate Discipleship**



**VERSE** for the week

[The disciples said] "Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."  
But he [Jesus] answered, "You give them something to eat."

**Mark 6:36-37**



**REMEMBER** this week

**Interruptions are opportunities to participate in and witness the generosity of God's every day present grace, in every day ordinary life.**



**LISTEN** attentively

Read Mark 6:30-44

5. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?
6. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?
7. What plans do you see being interrupted in this text?

We tend to put a lot of time and energy into careful planning. Strategic plans, holiday plans, succession plans, wedding plans, career or learning plans, training or fitness plans; you name a human endeavour and someone will have developed a plan for the best way to do it. Plans are not bad, they can help us to stay focussed on a goal and avoid distractions. However, when a plan is too rigid to account for interruptions or unexpected circumstances, then it can have a detrimental effect. When plans work well, they give us purpose and focus and create space for us to react confidently to unforeseen situations. However, plans can also cause us to become single minded and tunnel visioned causing us to miss the opportunities that some interruptions bring along with them.

In this reading from Mark's gospel, Jesus begins with a plan. He sees that his disciples have been working hard, they need a chance to rest, get fed, and be refilled for the continuing journey that lays ahead of them. So, Jesus plans to take them to a quiet place across the lake. The only problem being that large crowds have already gathered in this 'quiet place' when Jesus and his disciples arrive. Jesus' plan is interrupted by the needs of this crowd of people. Jesus' response to them is one of compassion. The disciples on the other hand respond with indignation and want to move them on so they can get some peace and quiet.

8. Is your response to interruption more often like Jesus' or more often like the disciples? Why do you think that is?
9. Do you think the disciples response (or your own), might have been different at the beginning of the day after a good rest and hearty breakfast (with coffee!) than it was at the end of a busy day with no chance to eat? How do your immediate circumstances effect the way you respond to interruptions or the needs of others?

Often we are more prepared to notice and address the needs of others when our own needs don't feel so great or so immediately pressing. Part of our problem comes when we feel all the burden of addressing those needs by ourselves. Perhaps this is why Jesus gets such a sarcastic and snarky response from the disciples when he asks them to give the crowd something to eat. Perhaps equally significant is the enormity of the task Jesus is asking them to do. 5000 men plus additional women and children is a lot of mouths to feed. The disciples hadn't even eaten yet and they were being asked to come up with food for well over 5000 people, a ridiculous requests when they had already figured it was best just to send the people away.

10. Can you identify any situations in your own life where meeting the needs of others feels like an unreasonable request? What is it for you that makes it seem unreasonable?
11. Remember, Jesus' plans had also been interrupted. He was seeking a quiet place and instead found himself addressing a crowd which had a need he knew he could meet. He was moved with compassion. How often do you find yourself moved with compassion for the plight of others? How would you define compassion?



**GROW** deeper

There are two different approaches when it comes to interruptions and responding to them. We can be stingy, like the character Scrooge from Charles Dickens, 'A Christmas Carol'. We can refuse to be distracted by the interruptions and requests of others, holding tightly to everything we have in an attempt to ensure that we do not go without and that our own goals are achieved. Or we can be generous, seeing the opportunity God has given us to allow his blessings to us, to flow into the lives of others and to achieve the goals of his kingdom in this world.

Look closely at what Jesus asked the disciples to do in this situation. They saw a need that was beyond their capacity to address. They saw a food bill of over half a year's wages and simply none of them had that kind of cash. In response to their objections Jesus simply asks them to find and to bring what they have.

**12. Have you ever been reluctant to give because your contribution seemed too small to make a difference? What does that tell you about how you see God?**

**Read Mark 12:41-44**

This story of the widow's offering is a good reminder of what God calls us to do. If we only give when we feel like we have enough, then we will never give generously. Recent studies have shown that people with six or seven figure salaries are rarely any happier with their financial situation than those earning around \$70,000 a year. It seems that the more we have, the more we want, and enough is never really enough. It is when we recognise that all we have is already a generous gift to us from our Heavenly Father and we come to him prepared to give it all to him to multiply and distribute as he sees fit, that true generosity begins to grow.

**13. What happened to the disciple's needs for food and rest during all of this? Were their needs met also or did they have to go without? What can we learn from that for our own lives?**



While the story doesn't specifically mention the disciples having a feed, they collected one basket of leftovers each. While attending to the need of the crowd and responding to the interruption, the disciples went from having 5 loaves and 2 fish between them to having a whole basket of food each. While we need to guard ourselves from giving **so that** God will be generous with us, we can give confidently and generously **because** God is generous to us. He has demonstrated his generosity over and over again in his interactions with his people in Scripture. He has demonstrated it most spectacularly in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. In our obedient responses of generosity with our time, talents, and treasures to the interruptions God places in our lives, he also shows his generosity to us. As we help others to be filled with blessings, so to do we continually receive blessing after blessing from God.

**14. How have your attitudes or understanding of interruptions and generosity been affected by this scripture?**

**15. What are you going to do this week to put your new learning or understanding into practice?**

**16. Share with someone from your group how you want to be generous or change the way you respond to interruptions this week. Ask them to check in with you during the week to see how you are going with it.**



- Praise God for his generosity to us.
- Thank Jesus for his faithfulness in seeing out the Father's plan all the way to the end.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to grow a heart of generosity in you to see and meet the needs of others.



You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

**[Name], God will generously meet all your needs. Amen.**