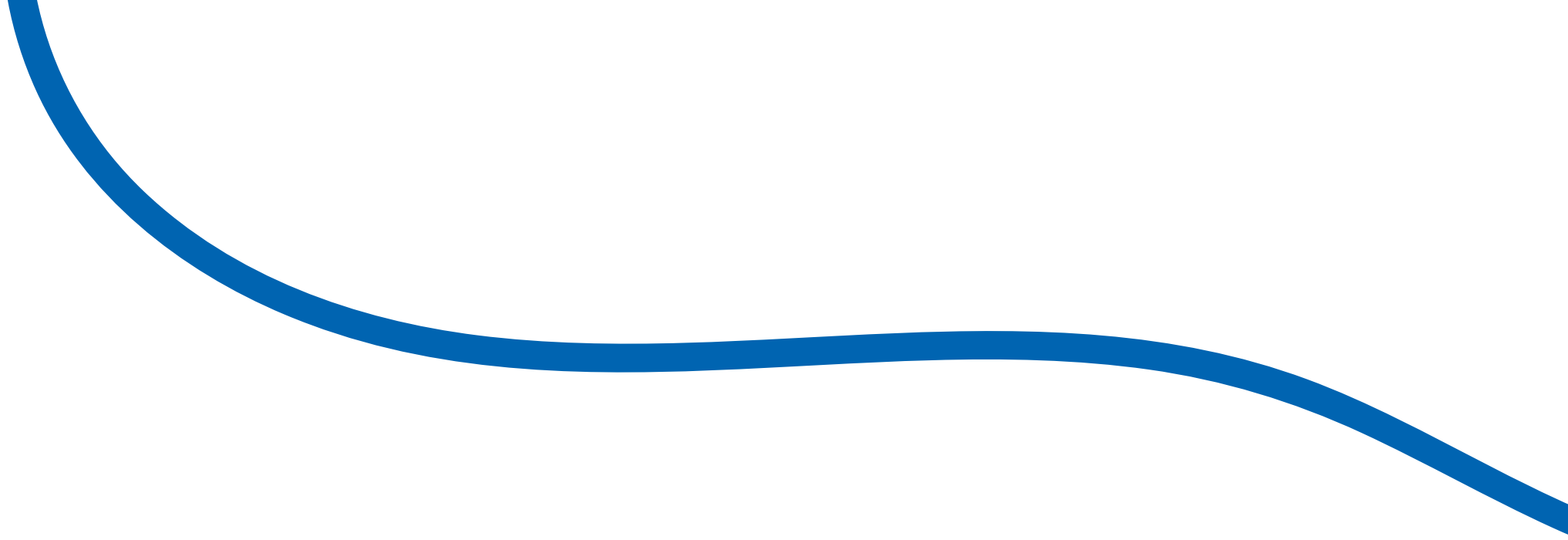




GENEROUS DISCIPLESHIP
Together... let's share more





'Once I'd understood what God was saying to me, I realised that I had started on a journey of discovery about myself and the reasons why I needed to give sacrificially and generously. It isn't about what I want, it's most definitely about God's requirements of me.'

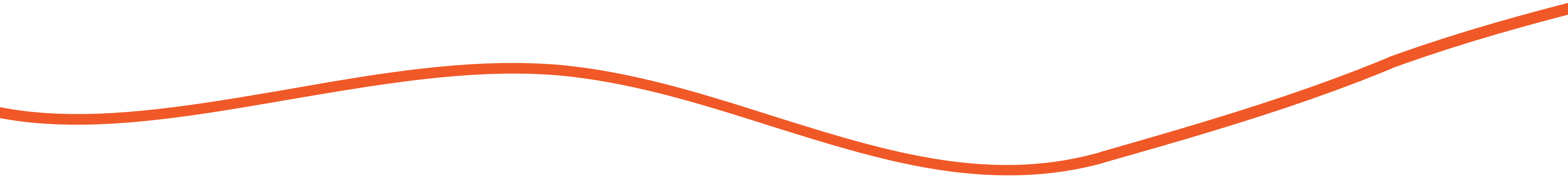
Generous Discipleship encourages corps to assess and refresh their understanding and knowledge of the important place that generous and sacrificial giving has in our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

It provides an opportunity to reflect on our life with Christ and to ask ourselves, 'What is it I treasure more than God? What's my lifestyle like? Is it one of generosity and sacrifice?'

Undoubtedly, genuine and life-changing generosity is painful. It doesn't come easily for any of us. It is a journey we embark on when we become disciples of Christ; it's a work in progress.

Perhaps that's why corps who have embraced Generous Discipleship have often likened it to embarking on a journey of discovery.

In his book *Remembrance of Things Past*, Marcel Proust wrote: 'The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.' We need to challenge ourselves to take a fresh look at why and how we give to God, as well as considering what it means to live generously, by looking at our giving with 'new eyes'.



Generous living, generous giving

'It is said that when the heart is willing, it finds a thousand ways; but when the heart is unwilling, it finds a thousand excuses. If we want to honour God with our time, we need to realise that our time is not our own, it is God's time.'

Generosity shapes so many aspects of our discipleship, through the way in which we

- Set our priorities
- Use our time
- Spend or save our money
- Care for the planet
- Pursue or build relationships

When we open God's word, we are invited to take a step back and look at

- What it means to know and relate to a generous God
- What it means to be generous in response to God's generosity to us
- How we can live out our generosity in our corps and communities using the gifts God has given us

Retired General André Cox challenged all Salvationists when he wrote:

'...the way we order our lives and make use of the resources, opportunities and abilities God gives to us should mark us out as Christians and disciples of Jesus; people whom others simply can't ignore; because Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, is alive in us motivating and empowering us to live lives of faithful love, sacrificial service and abundant generosity.'

As Christians, as members of the church of The Salvation Army, we need to learn more about generosity, to consider how we utilise our time, talents and treasure, to think through our commitment to God and to carefully and prayerfully consider our response to God's incredible generosity to us, his children.

What's involved?

Once the corps has connected with Generous Discipleship, your adviser will be in contact to help the corps leadership team put together the various elements in a way which is most suitable for your corps, by utilising the following three principles:

Biblical teaching – time is set aside so that the corps family can meet together to explore what God's word teaches us, and the emphasis it places on us as Christians to live as generous disciples, using the resources God has given us – our time, skills and abilities and our financial resources.

Hospitality – a fellowship meal is a good way of bringing the whole corps family together. This may be done by having brunch, or a sit-down buffet dinner, or even a soup and roll lunch. This provides opportunity for all within the corps to share together in a more relaxed atmosphere and reflect on the blessings that we receive from God. Please do not be concerned if the corps are not able to undertake hospitality. You will be able to discuss this further when you meet with your adviser.

Pledging of our gifts – Sunday brings an end to the time that is set aside for Generous Discipleship when, after prayerful consideration, during worship, corps members are invited to pledge their giving to God through an altar service.

'If you will assess what you have to offer in terms of your time, your treasure, and your talents, you will have a better understanding of how you might uniquely serve.'
(Rick Stern)

Yes, there is a lot to think about and you probably have a few questions that need answering, so following are examples of some of the questions that are asked:

Question: Why do we need to consider Generous Discipleship?

Answer: God has set us the example of generosity by giving us everything that we need to exist in the world that he created, and he expects us to mirror his generosity in all that we do by supporting our church with our time, skills, abilities, gifts and money, by giving in a way that helps and supports our church and mission in our local community.

Question: How can we make this happen and encourage Generous Discipleship in our corps?

Answer: Encouraging the corps to take ownership of their giving is the first step of the journey. Once this has happened, you will find that they are ready to delve into God's word to find out what he wants to bring to each person's attention.

Question: How can the Generous Discipleship team help us with this?

Answer: The Generous Discipleship team are there to help and support you, provide resources that are relevant for the various activities and needs of your corps, being as 'hands on or off' as you need us to be. We have set Bible studies that you can use, or we can design something together with your corps leadership that fits your corps requirements.

Question: How much do you charge for this?

Answer: Nothing – all we ask is that our adviser is provided with accommodation and sustenance whilst supporting the corps.

Question: How long is all this going to take?

Answer: If this is the first time that a corps has been involved with Generous Discipleship, we would encourage them to spread any teaching activities across a week (ie Sunday to Sunday). For example, prior to the concentrated teaching and arrival of your Generous Discipleship adviser, the corps leaders would be asked to commence preparatory teaching at least two weeks before the agreed date, as this helps to prepare corps members and they are not then taken by surprise when invited to participate in the Bible study activities and reflection.

The first Sunday (the agreed date) that the adviser attends will be the introduction for the week's activities, and the final Sunday will include time for final reflection and an act of pledging. Obviously how this looks across the week will depend if there is a request to include other activities such as music practices, Home League, Over-Sixties etc.

However, we appreciate that not all corps can participate in this way, and we would then suggest that a concentrated weekend event might be more appropriate. For example, this might consist of Friday night meal / buffet tea with a Bible study, or Saturday morning study with brunch, alongside Sunday worship and pledging.

When you commence discussions with your adviser, they will help you to make the most appropriate arrangements that are right for the corps.

Question: What can we expect from our adviser? How involved will they be?

Answer: The adviser is there to assist you, and during your initial conversations they will take you through various options so that you can decide how involved you wish them to be. For example, you might be asked to consider:

- How would you envisage the various events taking place across the week/weekend?
- Do you have Bible study groups already set up? If not, do you have someone who can lead a Bible study, or do you require help from the adviser?
- Is the adviser required to lead Sunday worship, or just participate within the meeting?
- The corps has been on this journey for a number of years now; how involved do you wish the adviser to be?
- At the end of the Bible study, is there any benefit to having a question-and-answer session?

What happens now?

We invite you to pray about Generous Discipleship as we know that God will show the direction that's right for your corps. When the corps is ready to move forward, contact your adviser who will be happy to talk you through the next steps.

'And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: they gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But since you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you -- see that you also excel in this grace of giving.'

2 Corinthians 8: 1-7

If you require more detailed information, please do contact us and we will be happy to speak to or meet with your corps officers or leadership/representative team to discuss this further.

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The Salvation Army is a Christian church and registered charity in England and Wales 214779,
in Scotland SC009359 and in the Republic of Ireland CHY6399.