

'Tis Better to Give Than to Receive — Adly Campos

It is much better to give than to receive. The Spirit in heaven has always been giving. The greatest manifestation was in giving the precious life of Jesus—God's own Son—who made it possible to come back to the Father's love and receive eternal life. God is love! Like rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures. It was His nature to give His very life. It is the outflow of unselfish love.

In the biblical teachings, we see this truth widely taught. It is more blessed to give than to receive, said the apostle Paul in Acts 20:35: "I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' " (NLT).

That is somewhat difficult to understand, isn't it? Happier to give than to receive? But it is true. When we read God's Word, we find out that it is absolutely the case. It is exactly what happens. When we give, we receive. And it is more blessed to give than to receive.

We will look at reasons why it is more blessed to give than to receive. First though, let us look at the biblical history of giving. All along the history of humanity, people have been very giving. The Israelites, for example, used to give up to 25 percent of their income back to God, even though they had very heavy taxes to pay. This was the condition that, if fulfilled, God would pour abundant material blessings on them.

Another example that we see in the Bible is when Moses was about to construct the tabernacle in the desert. While the building of the sanctuary was taking progress, the people—young and old, men, women, and even children—continued to bring their offerings until those in charge of the work found that they had had enough, and even more than they could use.

Parents, there is a great lesson for us here. We need to teach our children the big lesson that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Children love to receive all they can. But they need to learn this important lesson. And that is taught in the home. They observe Mom and Dad. They see how their parents give back to the Lord, and when they learn that lesson when they're little, when they grow up, they will do exactly the same as they saw in their parents.

When talking about the tabernacle that Moses built, it came to the point where Moses proclaimed throughout the camp, "Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary" (Exod. 36:6, ERV). He had received so much that he had to pass out a mandate saying, "Do not bring anything else." Something similar also happened during the construction of Solomon's temple. David was in charge of gathering all the material that was going to be used, but he understood very well that everything came from God.

All these bounties that we receive come from Him. If only those today would rejoice in the Savior's love, realizing that their silver and gold are the Lord's and should be used to promote His glory—not grudgingly to enrich and gratify themselves. He has an indisputable right to all that He has lent His creatures. All that we possess is His, according to the Word of God. In Psalm 50 we read that all cattle belong to Him. The silver, the gold—everything is His. He has *lent* it to us that we will manage it. But, He says, "Return to me a 10 percent of everything that I give you. You can keep the 90 percent."

There is a beautiful story in the New Testament. Jesus, when He was visiting the temple in Jerusalem—Solomon's great temple—was impressed when He saw a poor widow come and humbly deposit two mites. He called His disciples' attention to the fact that she had given *more* than others, for she gave *everything she had*, and not the leftovers. We can read this: "There came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites" (Mark 12:42, ASV). It was such a small amount that it was only fractions of a penny. But that is all she had. She came and she dropped what she had. And He said to His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, this poor widow cast in more than all they that are casting into the treasury: for they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living" (verses 43, 44, ASV).

We need to learn lessons from people in the Old Testament and New Testament. Today, one of the most serious trials that we can face as Christians is faithfulness in returning our tithes to God and the generosity in our offerings. If there was faithfulness and generosity in our giving, there would be enough funds to finish the preaching of the gospel in the whole world. God tested the faithfulness of our first parents in the Garden of Eden when He said to them, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:16, 17, NKJV).

Of course we know the result. They did not pass the test. They failed. They were not faithful in obeying God's command not to eat from that fruit. Today, we are tested in our faithfulness when it comes to returning our tithes and offerings.

As I said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. Let's look at some of the blessings that we obtain when we give. To give is to obey God's command. He asks us to return 10 percent back to Him. He says, "You can keep 90 percent, and you should handle it wisely. But 10 percent is Mine, and I want you to return it back to Me to be used in My house." When we obey His command, we but only enhance our lives. In obeying God's command, we also increase our own happiness. In the Bible we read that the people always gave willingly and happily, knowing that God wanted to fulfill the promise that they were going to be blessed if they returned 10 percent to God. When we give, we are going to prosper. That is a blessing, and it's a promise.

Also by giving we submit to God's leadership. He's not only our Savior, our God. He's also our Leader, our Lord. Every act of obedience recognizes that there is a higher authority in our lives. Our submission is really tested in the areas where our own very nature and situation make obedience more difficult. For example, submitting to Him—giving our wallet to Him. This reminds me of a story.

My father was about to baptize this man. He got into the baptismal water, and of course my father, as the pastor, raised his hand and said, "As a minister of the gospel, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." And he immersed the man into the water. When he got out, my father asked the man, "Why is it that you left your hand out from the baptismal water?" "Oh," the man said, "I'm not ready to give God my wallet yet." Is that our case? Are we willing to give God everything, but our wallet?

Giving also manifests God's heart. God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. Isn't that what the Bible teaches us? "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17, ESV). The larger our hearts are, and the wider our hands, the larger picture we paint of God's own character. What picture of God are you painting?

Also when we give, we illustrate God's plan of salvation. When we give to God's cause—its enlargement and realization—we become a part of His plan. At the very heart of the gospel is sacrificial self-giving. The most popular and best-known verse in the Bible is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (NASB). God *loves* to give, and He sets the right example as a Father.

I always say that parents teach the best to our children by example. And God has given us the example. He gives! And He gives sacrificially. And He expects for you and I to give sacrificially, painfully, for the benefit of others. We are faintly and on a small scale preaching the gospel message when we do this.

By giving we are trusting in God's provision. Do you know what is the biggest deterrent to giving? Fear. Giving sacrificially expresses our faith and trust in God to provide for us and our loved ones—our family. All we need to do is try Him.

There was a farmer who had a large plantation. He had just gotten acquainted with the gospel, and he learned that if he gave back to God 10 percent of all his earnings, he would be richly blessed. He started to give, but he was hesitant. He doubted if being richly blessed would be the case. But nevertheless, he started returning that 10 percent back to God. Well, the harvest was ready to be picked up. And you know what? There was a threat. It was said that there was going to be a big plague that was going to destroy all of the plantations. This man, who had just come to the knowledge of the truth, fell on his knees, and

said, "Father, I have been faithful with You in returning You what you ask of me. Now I hope and pray that You will be able to save my crop from being eaten by the plague."

Something marvelous and amazing happened. The plague came, and it did not do any harm whatsoever to his crop, but it did to his neighbors. Most of them lost everything they had. So again he fell on his knees and said, "Lord, now I can see that You are true to us. Whatever You say You're going to do. You do it for us. I trust You, dear Lord. I will be faithful from here on in returning back to You that 10 percent."

Many Christians have experienced the joy of casting their crumbs of bread upon the waters and the multiple loaves returning after many days, which is a promise that we find in Ecclesiastes 11:1.

When we give, we make God rejoice. You know, God is a God that loves joy. He rejoices whenever we give back to Him, whenever we obey His commands. In 2 Corinthians 9:7, we read that "God loves a cheerful giver" (NKJV). Through Paul's writings, we learn that the Macedonians were in a great trial of affliction. The abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. They were able to confide and trust in God, and they were given everything they had for the advancement of His work.

Giving advances God's kingdom. We have helped, if you think about it, many different organizations to grow, to succeed. But think of what a blessing results from funding the mission of Christ's church. We are paying salaries of ministers and missionaries. We are funding resources for outreach, evangelism, and discipleship. What a blessing it is for us to be able to put a little bit of our money into God's storehouse so that the gospel can be preached.

Giving also glorifies God's character. When giving with the right spirit, we are worshiping God; it is rendering to Him a tribute of praise. It is saying, "Father, You gave me everything, and here is but a small token of my gratitude and praise for all You have blessed me." Oh yes, when we give, we should do it with the right spirit—cheerfully.

Did you know that a checkbook is a theological document? It tells you who and what you worship, according to Billy Graham. So what does your checkbook say about you? Does it say that you are worshiping the true God, or something else?

[Editor's Note: Another way of saying this principle is, "A budget is a moral document."]

Do you see why it is better to give than to receive? When we exercise the spirit of generosity, we are becoming more like our Father in heaven, with whom we shall live throughout eternity. There's an epitaph on a tomb that reads, "What I gave, I have. What I saved and what I spent, I lost."

Let me share with you the words of Mr. Kraft. He had a very large corporation, and he said that he had given approximately 25 percent of all his enormous income to Christian causes for many years. These are his words: "The only investment I ever made which has paid consistently increasing dividends is the money I have given to the Lord." Will you and I be able to say those words? I pray that we learn that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Let's give generously. Let's give with a rejoicing heart so that the God in heaven will rejoice with us, and we might see the finishing of the preaching of the gospel to the whole world. May God bless you as you give back to Him what is His.

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