

Giving

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Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life / Giving / Philippians 4:19

Our natural human perspective is that we have somehow earned what we have. However, all we have is a gift from God. When we recognize this, we can easily give to the Church and the needs of those around us.

Notes

In part from "God Will Supply Your Every Need" May 19, 2015 by John Piper.
See "The Gift of Giving" to continue this topic.

Giving in the Life of the Church

In our culture, in this generation, as soon as I mention giving, money comes to mind.

My Money

Finances are an essential part of our lives.

By the money we earn or acquire, we are able to buy the things we need for life.

It's easy for any man (or woman) to let money become bigger than God.

Put money in its place.

Jesus said in

Luke 12:15 LEB

¹⁵ And he said to them, "Watch out and guard yourselves from all greediness, because not *even* when someone has an abundance does his life *consist* of his possessions."

Watch out for greediness

Guard yourself from greediness

Paul said it this way:

Ephesians 4:17–24 LEB

¹⁷This therefore I say and testify in the Lord, *that* you no longer walk as the Gentiles walk: in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance *that* is in them, because of the hardness of their heart, ¹⁹ who, becoming callous, gave themselves over to licentiousness, for the pursuit of all uncleanness in greediness. ²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹ if indeed you have heard *about* him, and you were taught by him (just as truth is in Jesus), ²² *that* you take off, according to your former way of life, the old man, who is being destroyed according to deceitful desires, ²³ be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new man (in accordance with God), who is created in righteousness and holiness from the truth.

The gentiles, the way of the world, is “in the futility of their mind”.

This he says is “being darkened in understanding” and “alienated from the life of God”.

There is “ignorance in them”.

Because of “the hardness of their heart” they become “callous” and give themselves to “the pursuit of all uncleanness in greediness”.

This is the way of “the old man”, it is the way of the world and it is a life “being destroyed” because of “deceitful desires”.

What Jesus cautioned us to “Watch out for” and “guard ourselves from” was a desire to have things, possessions, because these all fade away, these things are “being destroyed”.

In Romans it says

Romans 13:8 LEB

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another, for the one who loves someone else has fulfilled the law.

The context here is our lives within the existing social structure.

Rome was the seat of government and this statement “owe nothing to anyone” follows an explanation of the importance of government to protect those that do good.

We are to “be in subjection” in Romans 13:5 and

Romans 13:7 LEB

⁷ Pay to everyone *what is owed*: *pay* taxes to whom taxes *are due*; *pay* customs duties to whom customs duties *are due*; *pay* respect to whom respect *is due*; *pay* honor to whom honor *is due*.

This is not only to those in the Church. This is how we are to operate in the world.

This brings us to the next point in:

Hebrews 13:5 LEB

⁵Your lifestyle *must be* free from the love of money, being content with what you have. For he himself has said, “I will never desert you, and I will never abandon you.”

“Our lifestyle” is “being content with what you have”.

When we are “in subjection”, when we pay our taxes, when we pay what we owe, we give up something that we desire.

But, we don’t give it up so that we lack or to do without.

We do these things to step into God’s promise he will be our provider.

And what is it that God has said?

The Lexham English Bible Chapter 13

I will never desert you, and I will never abandon you.

As we look at this topic of “giving”, we are not only talking about money.

We are though, talking about giving up “greediness” that is fed by “deceitful desires”.

We are also talking about learning and replacing “ignorance” with a knowledge of God.

Ephesians 4:23–24 LEB

²³ be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new man (in accordance with God), who is created in righteousness and holiness from the truth.

This new man is in right relationship to God that is based on faith in God as provider and good Father.

This new man has a different mind-set.

This new man understands that there is a “Spiritual Discipline for the Christian Life” that is based, not on what we give up (the “deceitful desires”), but on the gift God has given to us.

The first key for our understanding is that:

God Doesn't Need Anything

God isn't asking us to give to meet some lack or need.

Acts 17:24–25 LEB

²⁴ the God who made the world and all the things in it. This one, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands *as if he* needed anything, *because* he himself gives to everyone life and breath and everything.

God is never served by us in a way that suggests he needed us.

Let me say it this way,

- God is fundamentally giver, not need-er.
- Everything we need comes from him, and nothing he needs comes from us.
- God is infinitely resourceful.

“God made the world and all the things in it” and many of those things were made to supply what we need.

Jesus Christ Came to Serve

Jesus didn't come to get or take anything from us.

In fact, Jesus Christ came to redeem us because we couldn't redeem ourselves.

Mark 10:43–45 LEB

⁴³ But it is not like this among you! But whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be most prominent among you must be the slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life *as a ransom for many.*”

God took on flesh as the “Son of Man” and came from heaven, but it was not for us to serve Him.

Jesus Christ, the “Son of Man” came to serve us, specifically, Jesus Christ came to give his life to pay our debt “to give his life as a ransom”.

Jesus Christ never needed anything from you.

Jesus Christ didn’t come so you could fulfill his need but to meet all of your need with his death.

God Will Supply Your Every Need

Wait a minute. Isn’t this about “Giving”. Yes, but first this is about reversing “the ignorance” that drives the gentiles as we read in Ephesians 4:18.

The gentiles, natural human beings that are born into this fallen world that is separated from God, always begin with themselves.

The natural human being always begins with “My Money”.

God doesn’t start with what we have.

God starts with what He has and says in

Philippians 4:19–20 LEB

¹⁹ And my God will fulfill your every need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

God promises to supply our every need.

This means that everything we have is a gift from God.

Matthew 6:31–33 LEB

³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’, ³² for the pagans seek after all these *things*. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these *things*. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and righteousness, and all these *things* will be added to you.

We do not receive anything apart from the sovereign grace of God.

This revelation, that it is God who provides for us, is the place we begin a right understanding of “Giving”.

What do we have to give to God? We have what He gives us.

1 Peter 4:11 LEB

¹¹ If anyone speaks, *let it be* as the oracles of God; if anyone serves, *let it be* as by the strength that God provides, so that in all *things* God will be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Every effort we make to serve God, every effort we make to give, our effort is being supplied by God.

God only wants us to be conscious that He is caring for us.

When we give, we are not giving something God doesn't have. Instead, we are giving back to Him something He has already given to us.

Giving is the Overflow

Our ability to give comes from the provision of God. That provision flows through the covenant we have in Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 8:9 LEB

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that *although he* was rich, for your sake he became poor, in order that you, by his poverty, may become rich.

The first thing God wants us to give is love.

1 John 4:7-12 LEB

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been fathered by God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ By this the love of God is revealed in us: that God sent his one and only Son into the world in order that we may live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son *to be the* propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God resides in us and his love is perfected in us.

God initiated his love toward us in Christ.

We are able to love one another generously because he first loved us.

This giving happens when our joy in God gladly and lovingly meets the need of another person.

Giving within the church is central to the character of the people of God and is based on all that God has given to us.

Our giving doesn't end with love though.

There may be things we give up to fulfill the work God has called us to.

Paul said

Philippians 4:12–13 LEB

¹² I know *how* both to make do with little and I know *how* to have an abundance. In everything and in all *things* I have learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to have an abundance and to go without. ¹³ I am able *to do all things* by the one who strengthens me.

Paul clearly had lean times where he had to “go without”.

Paul welcomed help from others when he needed it himself in

Philippians 4:14 LEB

¹⁴ Nevertheless you have done well by sharing with me in my affliction.

Paul didn't expect that he would always “have an abundance” and was able to give and also receive.

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

Our giving is to come from an overflow with joy in God's provision for us.

2 Corinthians 9:7 LEB

⁷ Each one *should give* as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or from compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Our giving is to meet the needs of others.

We embrace the call to love as God loves us when we are aware of and active to meet the needs of people around us.

Jesus was constantly moved with compassion toward people

Matthew 9:36 LEB

³⁶ And *when he* saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were weary and dejected, like sheep that did not have a shepherd.

Jesus ministered to their physical needs so they could receive the spiritual truth that would set them free.

Just as Jesus did, we also are called to count others as more significant than

ourselves and consider other people's interests as more important than our own

Philippians 2:3-4 LEB

³ Do nothing according to selfish ambition or according to empty conceit, but in humility considering one another better than yourselves, ⁴ each of you not looking out for your own interests, but also each of you *for* the interests of others.

Sometimes, we may give more than seems reasonable. Paul recounts the generosity of the Church in Corinth in

2 Corinthians 8:2-3 LEB

² that with a great ordeal of affliction, the abundance of their joy and the extreme depth of their poverty have overflowed to the wealth of their generosity. ³ I testify that *they gave* according to *their* ability, and beyond *their* ability, by their own choice,

These people gave beyond their ability. How would giving beyond your ability impact your life?

Was their giving at the cost of buying new clothes? Did they give up their vacation? Paul describes "the extreme depth of their poverty" so it is more likely they went far beyond giving up these things and even sacrificed their own necessary food.

Whatever it was that they gave up, they were not only content, but gave with an abundance of joy.

The "ignorance" in the gentiles, the way of thinking of the world, is that I need more. The new mind, the mind we have in Christ says "I am content".

1 Timothy 6:6-8 LEB

⁶ But godliness with contentment is a great means of gain. ⁷ For we have brought nothing into the world, so that neither can we bring anything out. ⁸ But *if* we have food and clothing, with these *things* we will be content.

I can be content because I have faith in God that

Philippians 4:19 LEB

¹⁹ And my God will fulfill your every need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

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