

**WHAT GOOD IS MY GIVING?
1 Timothy 6:17-19**

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Luke 6:38 says, *“Give and it will be given you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put in your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”* Yet what does this often misunderstood passage mean? When I give to others how exactly does God give back to me?

Well, one way God gives back to me is that giving makes me more like God. The good news is that God is a giver. Everything we have is a gift from God. When I give, I’m like God. The Bible says, *“God so loved the world that he gave...”* You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving. It makes you more like God.

A second way God gives back to me is that giving draws me closer to God. The Bible says, *“Where your treasure is, there your heart is also.”* Wherever I put my money that’s where my heart is. If I put my money into entertainment, that’s where my heart is. If I put my money into my house, that’s where my heart is.

If I put my money into my car, that’s where my heart is. If I put my money into buying prestige through expensive toys and extravagances, that’s where my heart is. In our family we put lots our money into music lessons and related things. Where you put your money is where your heart is. If you put your money into God, and his mission, it always draws us closer to him.

A third way God gives back to me is that giving is the antidote to materialism. We live in a very materialistic culture. Advertisers are not even subtle anymore. They just come out and say, *“You can buy happiness.”* That’s America. Life, liberty and the purchase of happiness! How can you live in a materialistic world and not be a material girl or boy?

1 Timothy 6:17-19 says, *“As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasures of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that is really life.”*

First it says, *“As for those who are rich...”* That’s all of us. If you live in America, you’re rich. You could be the poorest American but you’re richer than the rest of the world. He says it’s okay to enjoy life, but true living comes from giving. We make a living by what we get but we make a life by what we give.

I think as parents we need to model a balance of giving and getting. If people are always getting more and more things what are our kids learning? Only to get. We need to model giving to our children. It is the only antidote I know to materialism. It draws me closer to God.

A fourth way God gives back to me is that giving strengthens my faith. God uses finances to test your faith. You only have so much money, so where is it going to go? God is saying, "Do you believe you can give and that I can help you take care of the rest of your bills?" Giving strengthens and stretches and tests my faith, my priorities, my trust in him.

A fifth way God gives back to me is that giving is an investment in eternity. The old saying is true, you can't take it with you but you can send it on ahead. And the way you send it on ahead is by investing it in people who are going there.

Jesus said, "*store up treasures in heaven.*" When we give to other people; when I give to help children and youth learn to know Jesus; when I give to help the evangelism, and outreach, and witness, and spiritual nurture and studies in a congregation; when I give to help missions build Christ's kingdom at home and in foreign lands I send it on ahead. Invest in eternity.

A sixth way God gives back to me is that giving blesses me in return. The truth is that whatever you give out you're going to get back. If you've been generous with criticism, you're going to get a lot of criticism. If you're generous with gossip, you're going to get gossip back.

If you're generous with encouragement, you're going to get encouragement back. It is the law of sowing and reaping. And if you're generous with your money, your things, your time, your life, you're going to receive generously in return.

You may be generously blessed with more business opportunities, or even more monetary blessings. It is amazing how generous and giving people, with Christian faith and values, are often trusted more by bosses, and clients, and investors, and employees, and are often rewarded and successful in their work.

And also the most generous people I know are the happiest people I know. The root word of "miserable" is "miser." Most people in our culture think, "If I get more, then I will be happy." And yet God says that is totally wrong. God says the more you give, the happier you will be.

So these are some things that God gives back to me when I give. And yet the question becomes, how do I get the most out of giving? We need to remember that God is more interested in my attitude than the amount. So what is the right attitude?

The first right attitude is to give willingly. What is important is not the amount but the attitude when you give. God doesn't look at what you give but how much is left over. He evaluates your generosity, your growing in faith, your love, and your discipline of giving a percentage. God always looks at how much you give in light of how much he's given you. Give willingly.

The second right attitude is to give thankfully. Psalm 116:12 asks, *“How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?”* You can’t. God has done so much for you and me that we ought to give out of gratitude. Did you choose to be born in America? It is a privilege God gave you and with that privilege comes responsibility.

Every time you give your offering or tithe you’re saying, “Thanks, Lord!” And yet some say, “But I earned this with my own hands.” Who gave you your hands? “But I started this business with my own mind!” Who do you think gave you your mind? Everything you have is a gift from God. Give willingly. Give thankfully.

The third right attitude is to give joyfully. The Bible says, *“God loves a cheerful giver.”* I heard about a couple bumper stickers. One said, *“God loveth a cheerful giver, but he also receiveth from a grouch.”* And another said, *“Tithe if you love Jesus, any fool can honk.”*

The word “cheerful” in Greek is the word *hilaros* from which we get the word hilarious. In the New Testament when they gave an offering they had so much fun. In today’s society when we take the offering that’s often the low point for many. But at that time they were hilarious.

I firmly believe that as Messiah has been growing in faith and giving it has become more of a joyful church. There have been times when some expressed anger when stewardship and money were talked about; times when meeting budgets was like pulling teeth. And yet stretching our faith and vision has helped our church to become more of a giving church.

And the reason Messiah is a happy, joyful, and love filled church is because it’s growing a church full of givers—givers of our time, our energy, our money. When you get around givers you are around people who are happy, hopeful, optimistic people. When you get around stingy people you get around miserable people. Give willingly, joyfully, thankfully.

The fourth right attitude is to give regularly based on a percentage. It is important to have a regular routine of looking at my paycheck and giving a growing percentage to a tithe or beyond. I know that some give grain, stocks or larger gifts a few times a year which is great. And yet we also need a regular pattern of worship and a regular focus on giving a percentage of your income. It is important that giving is integrated with my daily growth and life of faith.

And the fifth right attitude is to give expectantly. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says, *“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. And whoever sows generously will reap generously.”* In other words, you give generously expecting God to produce great results with these gifts. You give expecting lives to be blessed and miracles to happen.

The good news, my friends, is that God so loved the world that he gave and he wants us to become more like him. It’s not, “How little can I give and still be a Christian.” But rather it’s asking, “What percentage of my income is God calling me to give?” Giving is a privilege and joy when we are living and growing in our faith in Jesus. Thanks for your generosity!