

Can money forge friendships? (19:6)

Many seek the favor of a generous man and every man is a friend to him who gives gifts.

THE TEXT (NASB)

Many seek the favor of a generous man and every man is a friend to him who gives gifts.

Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts. KJV - Proverbs 19:6

INTRODUCTION



Gifts get attention. Gifts make friends. People love the generous.

We all love presents, and when the gifts are genuine—with no strings attached—we truly appreciate the giver. So Jesus instructs us to use this technique to make friends.

How can we change from loving stuff and using people, to using stuff and loving people?



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COMMENTARY

Generosity is admired everywhere. And the more you give, the more you're asked to give, so this text makes a progression from "many" to "everyone" (ESV). As we've learned, when the news of our generosity gets out, the more we're sought out. In fact, the *Albert Barnes Commentary* says the phrase "seek the favour" literally means "stroke the face of." Whose face? The man of a princely nature, who gives magnificently. Everyone wants to be on the good side of a generous giver. And why not?

Giving versus Trading



It's easy to confuse generosity with trading. Exchanging gifts is not really giving—it's trading. Generosity is kindness, sacrifice, and giving to others without expecting anything in return. But there are gray areas. People love free samples; they know it's advertising, but it works, driving awareness and demand. The free sample is a "gift" of sorts, leading to sales and even consumer loyalty. But is it a gift?

We don't need to be wealthy to be generous. What makes us generous? A poor man who gives five dollars to charity is more generous than a rich man who gives fifty, but that's not how charities see it. Too often we focus on the size of the gift, instead of the sacrifice. Jesus did the opposite. He praised a widow who gave her last half-cents, and panned those who gave much, but held back much more (Luke 21:2). True generosity is measured by "Why?" rather than "How much?" Often the poor or middle class are more willing to share than the rich. The ability to give does not make people willing to give. What makes people generous? Sometimes past hardships make us more sensitive to the needs of others.

Translation: *Generous*

The word "generous" deserves careful attention. The Hebrew word here is נָדִיב (nā•dīb, pronounced "nah-deev"), and it's used twenty-seven times in the Bible. Curiously, it's also translated as "noble" in character or rank. It appears first in Exodus 35:5 to describe those Israelites who eagerly contributed their wealth to build the temple of God. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT), says the origin of nā•dīb is the verb nā•dāb, indicating



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a voluntary, freewill offering, “an uncompelled and free movement of the will unto divine sacrifice,” as they say. Yet it is sometimes translated as “princes” or “nobles.” Princes and nobles can afford to give more than paupers or peasants, and they may wish to give a righteous example.

Wealth provides the opportunity to obtain friends, even if shallow friends. A gift is often used as an icebreaker in a new relationship, to plant a new friendship. With proper nurturing, this friendship can grow deeper roots, but it’s seeded by an expression of generosity, even a modest generosity.

Classic Comments

Classic preacher-commentator Matthew Henry observed marvellously: “How those that are rich and great are courted and caressed, and have suitors and servants in abundance.... Even great men are humble supplicants to the prince. How earnest then should we be for the favour of God, which is far beyond that of any earthly prince.”

Scrooge

In Charles Dickens’ holiday novel, *A Christmas Carol*, we witness a stingy miser become a magnanimous philanthropist overnight. Ebenezer Scrooge is confronted with the ugliness of his past selfishness, his present opportunities for generosity, and the prospect of a hellish eternity, because of his selfish character. Realizing his possible, horrible destiny empowers him to change his ways and live generously with everyone around him. It takes a supernatural shock to awaken Ebenezer Scrooge, but he then changes from a despised parasite in the community to a beloved friend of all. He exchanges his vortex riches for expansive friendship.

Prayer



Clearly, God is the wealthiest of all; He is wealth itself. So we wisely seek God’s favour and ask Him in prayer for the gifts we desire. Sadly, many of us don’t—for a variety of reasons. One is that God is invisible, and it’s easier to focus on the wealthy we can see; for the goodies we can see. Yet, friendships are more valuable, especially in the long-term, than wealth in the short-term. Giving is in the nature of God, who has infinite resources, an intense desire to share, and a willingness to give us whatever we give to others.



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus advised His followers to use riches to forge “forever” friendships.

In his teaching on money management in Luke 16:9, Jesus instructed to “make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.” In this passage, we get a sense of Jesus’ feelings about money.

First, He calls money, “unrighteous.” Secondly, He identifies its power as temporary. And third, we learn that “eternal dwellings” are real places that will receive visitors, maybe even us. He told us to use our short-term assets (wealth) to acquire long-term assets (friendships).

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Use your wealth to win friends.
- Don’t be miserly.
- Consider using free samples to introduce a new product to the marketplace.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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KEY WORDS

advertising, charity, friend, generosity, gift, kindness, more assets (quantity), prayer, business, free, widow, bf sharing

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Generous Genevieve?



Generous Genevieve loves to give and has a big heart. Sometimes she chuckles to herself as she gives her gifts. Now here's a secret about her giving: She only gives to those who really need it—not just to anyone who asks for a handout. She gives because she thinks it's the right thing to do.

Strangely enough, the more she gave to those in genuine need, the more she got back. Some people give in order to get, but she considers that mere trading. Generous Genevieve gives for the sheer thrill of it. By giving she is keeping herself from emotional cancer. Emotional cancer, also known as greed, can take over one's heart and destroy their ability to enjoy even the simple things of life. Genevieve gives in order to increase her giving capacity.

Sometimes it hurts Genevieve to give. Sometimes she is short of cash because she has given to someone else, but that shortage doesn't last long.

Genevieve believes that there is always a reward for giving to those in need. She thinks that her generosity will come back to her benefit sooner or later. She coined the expression, "What goes



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around—comes around.”

