

How can you ensure your economic security? (28:27)

THE TEXT (NASB)

He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.

*He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.
KJV - Proverbs 28:27*

INTRODUCTION



It's a paradox: by giving generously and systematically to the poor, we improve our own financial health.

When we methodically give to others, we always have enough. Generosity builds our security.

Our treatment of the poor either builds or undercuts our happiness, so there's a warning implied.



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COMMENTARY

Translation

Note that the Hebrew verb for “gives,” נתן (nāṭan, pronounced “nah-tan”), is an active participle, “giving,” rather than the past tense, “gave.” This implies that past deeds of charity may have already been repaid. So it’s best to give continuously to the needy.

The Hebrew word for the poor is רָשׁ (rāš, pronounced “roosh”).

It’s Not Logical



This violates human logic. God promises that, by giving our substance to those in need, we really guarantee that our own needs will be met. We must be careful, though: this proverb does not say “give to get wealth,” but “give to find peace.” It’s protection. The promise is not an increase in our assets, but securing of them, so giving is a type of insurance, where the premiums are charitable donations. There is a well-known maxim: What goes around comes around.

Secure *and* Happy

God promises a double benefit to those who give to the poor: security and happiness. Happiness—our delight in a life well lived—comes to those who are gracious to the poor (Proverbs 14:21 NASB). This timeless truth is being re-discovered and popularized in the book, *Happy Money: The Science of Spending* by Elizabeth Dunn (UBC) and Michael Norton (Harvard). The key message of the book is this: satisfaction and happiness do not come from over-indulging, but from under-indulging and giving the surplus to others. To whom? This proverb sheds light on the science of spending. We must give to those most in need—not just anyone who asks, and certainly not to deadbeat relatives, trying to emotionally blackmail us. We are secure and happy in helping the truly poor, helpless, and lonely.

Doing Our Share?

How do we respond to a known need? God doesn’t expect us to fix all the world’s woes single-



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handedly, but he does expect us to help when we see a real need. God watches our response to those in need and delights us accordingly. But real generosity requires prudence. We must be careful that we don't give to the undeserving. [What are the wrong ways to treat the rich and poor?](#)

Won't Look



Sometimes we avoid seeing the troubles of the poor simply from distaste or embarrassment. We turn away, sometimes without even knowing we're doing it. It bothers us to meet the patrons of a homeless shelter, and with global mass media, malnourished children become our background images. Ignoring becomes easy, when "all the world's woes" seem unsolvable. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, both a priest and a bureaucrat skipped to the other side of the road, when they saw the half dead man lying in the ditch (Luke 10:30-34). And this proverb suggests not only that they failed in charity, but thereby invited suffering upon themselves. Those lacking compassion for the needy will suffer for it. In contrast, the Good Samaritan had cause for satisfaction and happiness—he knew he was living well. Likewise, we must train our eyes to see all those little and not-so-little opportunities to help the helpless and lonely.

God Hates Selfishness

Curses come to those who ignore the needy, the helpless or the lonely. They may be uttered by the poor themselves, cursing the stingy, or by God, who sees all and hates selfishness. There will be problems with health, family relationships, accidents, deficits, or public disgrace. Hoarders turn in on themselves, like the vortex in a flushing toilet.

Debt and Charitable Giving

Should you give to charity while you yourself are still in debt? After all, isn't your first obligation to the one who loaned you money? Shouldn't you acknowledge your creditor first?

No. Your first obligation is to the One who loaned you life. You should acknowledge your Creator ahead of your creditor. God Almighty has all prior claim. God gives you the power to earn wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18), but more importantly, He gives your next breath (Job 33:4). It is important to honour our creditors, but even more important to honour our God (Proverbs 3:9). God can easily give us the resources to pay off our debts (Proverbs 3:10).



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Craig Ford's Advice

Author of *Transforming Your Financial Diet*, Craig Ford wrote in his blog/email on April 18, 2013 that Christians should continue to give charitably while paying off debt. He described his personal experience:

During my senior year of college, my wife and I were just married. I didn't have legal working status in the States for about 9 months after we were married. Those first nine months were hard. We were both full time students. Our only income was from work study programs offered through the school. (Legally that was the only way I could work.) We lived in an apartment that cost \$275 per month. We couldn't even control our own heat. Sometimes it would be blistering cold, and at other times, it was sweltering hot. We'd make homemade pizza (a tradition we've now had for almost 13 years). However, back in those days, we'd put corn on our pizza because we couldn't afford any meat. One day on a walk we found a piece of furniture someone put out for the dump. We took it home. We had food and clothing, so we were content with that. We always found a way to give.

Read more: <http://moneyhelpforchristians.com/4-reasons-to-give-while-paying-off-debt/#ixzz5bYuev9mZ>

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I especially appreciate Craig's insight about giving while still in debt. "Giving draws our focus to our blessings." It's like looking at the full half-cup rather than the empty half-cup. That's why Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than receive."

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

In a story illustrating kindness, Jesus describes two men, a priest and a bureaucrat, who saw someone wounded, but deliberately walked on the other side of the road, to avoid his problem. Their lack of benevolence contrasts vividly with the caring Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

Jesus' greatest gift to the poor was His own life so that those who are spiritually destitute, and even dead, could have joy-filled eternal life (2 Corinthians 8:9).

It's a paradox, violating all our natural expectations, but God's security is a free gift only to the poor (Matthew 5:3). The rich and self-sufficient may be in deep trouble (Luke 6:24, Revelation 3:17).



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APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Give something to the poor on a regular basis—daily, weekly or monthly.
- View generosity as an integral part of your financial stability, not as an optional add-on or as an unwelcome reduction of your financial resources.
- Who comes to mind as someone poor whom you can help now?

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



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KEY WORDS

thrift, charity, curse, ignorance, generosity, happy, insurance, stinginess, more assets (quantity), scarcity, security, want, poor (rāš pronounced “rash”), 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.”

