

Why should you give things away? (11:24-25)

There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered.

THE TEXT (NASB)

There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered.

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. Classic KJV - Proverbs 11:24

INTRODUCTION



Give freely and you will get even more than you had before you started. It pays to give. A Chinese proverb says: “A bit of fragrance always clings to the hand that gives roses.”

Scatters implies unfocused, carefree giving. It describes giving to many individuals, families, and organizations rather than just one or two. And the word here is “scatters”— not “wastes.” This is not indiscriminate giving. However, hoarding wealth is a real loss both to the one who could give and the one who needs. Proper giving is a “win-win,” while hoarding is ultimately a “lose-lose.”

This proverb reveals a classic paradox: We give away and yet end up satisfied, contented. Is it also true that, if we hoard our resources, we end up truly dissatisfied, discontented?



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COMMENTARY

This proverb does not say that the generous man will be rich. The text promises prosperity. There is a big difference between having riches, and having the health, peace, and dignity to enjoy those riches. The prosperous enjoy riches without trouble. Generosity increases our ability to enjoy our riches.

Scatters Implies Broad Distribution



The Hebrew word here is translated as “scatters” in all major English translations. Picture a farmer scattering seed. The farmer scatters seed where it can grow well. He does not plant one seed at a time with obsessive examination and analysis. Good planting does not guarantee germination. Certainly the farmer avoids mindless sowing onto poor, weedy, or hardened soil, but he also knows that it’s more important to sow much seed, than worry about the soil and plant little.

Likewise, charitable giving, liberal, fast, and free, without excessive conditions tied to the gifts, sees the giver receiving more. The increase comes later, through unpredictable circumstances: “Unseen powers.” The source of the increase is not stated, but described here simply as a law of cause and effect.

Greed and Need

Greed in one person prolongs or even creates need in another—proof again that wealth is not “taken” but “made.” Greed does not help the one who hoards the money. We can hold our money so tightly that we hurt ourselves. Both the person in want and the potential giver end up with less. The expression “what is justly due” implies an evaluation in the broadcasting of the seed, to make sure that it is indeed “justly due.” It’s part of the responsibility of the giver to exercise discretion, prior to making the gift. The mere request for assistance is not proof of the real need.

How Much Should You Give?

Author C. S. Lewis said it best:



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I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with those same income as our own, we are probably giving too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot, because our charitable expenditures exclude them.¹

Develop Discernment



We see an example of the apostle Paul using real discernment in his First Letter to Timothy (5:3-17). He develops many specific criteria for giving to those in need within the church. These qualifications for receiving financial support demonstrate that giving should be generous, but not mindless. As a great maxim says it: “None but the crazy give alms to the lazy”—it’s not good for them.

We should give whenever we have the ability to give. Yet we can water others only when we have water to give. When we’re given the cautionary instructions on an airliner, we’re told to put the oxygen mask on ourselves first, before we then help any child or senior travelling with us on the plane. We should give only when we can give.

Saving by Giving

By giving to others, we store up benefit for ourselves at some unpredictable future date. It’s like making a donation to a public blood bank—blood we created, and knowing thereby that there’ll be blood available for us in the future—blood others created. While this analogy may not hold everywhere, it surely holds in God’s perfect realm of cause and effect. We establish our own future income by giving whenever we can to those who are in need.

Our charity is God’s design for our financial safety net. To eliminate our insecurity about our income, we give generously from what we have, to those currently in need, and God ensures that in our future need, others give to us. That’s God’s promise. Though the payback for generosity is guaranteed, the timing or amount is not specified. Most likely it comes at a time



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when he who waters will himself need to be watered.

We should not overspend or indulge ourselves when we have excess—that creates only anxiety for things we don't need. Sadly, pretending to be rich keeps many people poor. Over-consumption, self-indulgence, and luxury are the arch-enemies of generosity. This text encourages cheerful giving since it promises that what is given is not lost, but repaid—if not in this life, then in the next.

Watch this video is Brian Mosley [“What is a Trader?”](#)

The proverb alludes to financial inter-dependence, rather than independence. Many seek financial independence, but independence has a major pitfall: Loneliness. I believe there's a better way—financial inter-dependence, with those of kindred spirit, making wealth together instead of taking wealth alone. We get joy when we give and receive from those whom we love.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus speaks of giving as if we have an endless supply: “If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Give to him who asks of you and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you,” Matthew 5:40, 42.

“Give and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return,” Luke 6:38.

“It is more blessed to give than to receive,” Acts 20:35.

Jesus was generous in giving of himself to the utmost. Jesus gave the ultimate (his throne, comfort, innocence, reputation and life), but did not receive payback, at least not yet. He has not yet returned in power with his angels to take up his visible government on Earth (2 Thessalonians 1:7), yet “as a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied,” Isaiah 53:11.

APPLICATION



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- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Do you believe that your resources are limited or unlimited? A useless question! Limited of course. Test your conclusion by giving generously to those in need.
- Study the lives of those who love to hoard wealth. Which of the following are they missing: Joy, health, good reputation, or wisdom?
- Distinguish between wealth and prosperity. Name some people who were wealthy, but not prosperous—or vice versa

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



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KEY WORDS

thrift, generosity, greed, hoard, lose-lose, more assets (quantity), prosperity, retribution, social responsibility, want, win-win, withhold, 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.”



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FOOTNOTES

1. Discipleship Essentials, by Greg Ogden Copyright 1998, Intervarsity Press, Page 227 Expanded Edition 2007.

