

How can money restore relationships? (21:14)

THE TEXT (NASB)

A gift in secret subdues anger and a bribe in the bosom, strong wrath.

A gift in secret pacifieth anger; and a reward in the bosom strong wrath. KJV 21:14

INTRODUCTION



Gifts can heal broken relationships. As the scene opens, two people are upset with each other, and a wise use of wealth can be the solution.

If given properly, a gift can restore broken friendships, but the giver must be careful not to make a big show, celebrating himself. Publicity in generosity diminishes the healing power of giving.

Secrecy enhances a gift's power to pacify and opens the door for reconciliation.



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COMMENTARY

Translation: *Bribe*

I usually prefer the NASB translation for its accuracy, but with this proverb, I think other versions do better. The Hebrew word for “bribe,” דָּחַן (šō•ḥāḏ, pronounced “shō-khadh”), can also be translated as “present,” “reward,” or “payment,” and it should be translated as “present,” for these reasons:

- It’s the clear message of the first part of the text;
- It’s similar to the KJV translation;
- Strong wrath, although unpleasant, is not illegal, while bribes promote illegal activity;
- In Luther’s German, it is translated as “Geshenk,” meaning gift.

Peace Offerings



A present becomes a bribe when it’s given to motivate any sort of evil. Then the desired purpose is the deed, not the other person. Anger is not always unrighteousness. Something given to subdue anger is not a bribe. So this is gifts for personal reconciliation, peace offerings.

In contrast, commentator Charles Bridges believed that secret giving implies sinful giving, “to avoid the cry of injustice or to hide greed.” Though this is sometimes true, I don’t think it always is. If you can win back a friend with a gift, then do it, but properly. The words “in secret” and “in the bosom” imply the giving is done in private, not as a public event. Why?

Famous preacher John Gill explains, “Anger is a fire in the breast, and restraining it is properly expressed by extinguishing it: This gift or present does—as it did in Esau from Jacob, in David from Abigail. But it must be secretly given, otherwise it may provoke more, since it may show vanity in the giver, and covetousness in the receiver; and the former may [then] have more honour than the latter.”

Public versus Private



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If the gift is given publicly, the situation becomes more complex. People are watching and making personal judgments. Public reputation and perception come into play. The recipient may be viewed as impoverished, in need, or greedy. Thus the recipients' public image may be sullied. Suddenly the gift is not appreciated. It could make the recipient even angrier toward the giver.

Similarly, the public may see the giver as a "good guy," while the angry recipient still sees him as a "bad guy," trying to look good in public. Commentator Matthew Henry wrote, "It must be a gift in secret and a reward in the bosom, for he that takes it would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended with; but, if it be done privately, all is well. No man should be too open in giving any gift, nor boast of the presents he sends."

A gift in secret focuses all good intentions on the recipient, not to gain any public acclaim or honour, but to give satisfaction only to the recipient. Peace offerings don't always work. Sometimes (see Proverbs 6:26) the offense can seem so great, that even gifts given in secret are ineffective.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus gave very clear instructions on this topic.

When you give a gift or charitable donation, keep it as secret as possible. Do not make a big show of your generosity. Jesus speaks of Someone most powerful and kind, who sees and rewards especially anonymous giving (Matthew 6:3-4). God the Father sees and rewards all acts of faith.

Indeed God looks deliberately for those who believe He is trustworthy, to reward consistently their living in faith (Hebrews 11:6).

APPLICATION



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- Memorize the text in your favourite translation and think about it often.
- Learn to give in secret. Don't make a donation as an exercise in public relations or a subtle form of advertising. Otherwise the recipient is not sure if you really want to help or just want to make yourself look good.
- Use money to heal important friendships if you are rich, especially those in your own family. Love people more than "stuff".
- Study Proverbs 19:6 to find out more about the interpersonal benefits of wise giving.

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



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KEY WORDS

advertising, bribe, charity, friend, generosity, less assets (quantity), peace, public relations, reputation, stinginess, wrath, 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.”

