

Journey CHURCH

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Session 1 Leader Guide

Read

The Lord cares most about our hearts. God does not bless our giving; He blesses giving from the right attitude of our hearts. When we give, we receive blessings; however, that should not be our main motivation for giving. We must confront any selfishness in our hearts.

Jesus says,

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:37-38).

Often people hear teaching or think these verses are about money. In fact, they do not speak about money at all. This passage does address giving, but Jesus' teaching here actually applies to every area of our lives because of the laws of sowing and reaping. If you plant or give a seed, you don't just get back one seed in return. You get back a tree or a plant that has produced many seeds. And that's the way God works; whatever you give, you're going to get more back.

Consequently, we benefit much more by giving good things rather than bad things, because we are going to get more of what-ever we have given. This truth becomes clear when we consider the larger context of these verses. For example, back up one more verse and look at what Jesus says in context:

"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Luke 6:36-37).

Only then does Jesus say, "Give and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38). Yes, this principle does apply to money, but a person can also give forgiveness. We can give mercy. We can give understanding, patience, time, or service. Jesus simply speaks about the broad principle of giving. Whatever you give will also be given back to you in "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." You get back so much more than you actually give. If

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you give judgment to someone, you will get judgment in return. However, it will be "pressed down, shaken together, and running over." Consider carefully what you are giving.

The basic problem with most teaching about giving based upon Luke 6:38 is that teachers present material gain as the primary motive for giving. God doesn't want us to catch the vision of getting; He wants us to catch the vision of giving.

In order to become generous givers, we must first confront the problem of a selfish heart. God cares very much about our hearts. Deuteronomy 15:7-15 directly addresses these matters of the heart in terms of generosity and giving. In this passage, Moses exhorts God's people to give generously and willingly to those who need help. Moses says, "You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand" (Deuteronomy 15:10). If a person refused to give to a fellow Israelite by thinking that the debt wouldn't be repaid before the Year of Jubilee (the year when all debts were cancelled or forgiven), then this refusal would be a direct violation of God's command. God does not want us to have selfish, begrudging hearts. God wants us to be generous because He is generous.

God did not create generosity because He needs our money or resources. God owns everything, and if He did need something, he could create more of it. The reason God created giving was for our benefit. Giving, more than any other activity that we as believers can do, works selfishness and greed out of our hearts and lives.

In addition to dealing with our selfish hearts, God wants us to take care our grieving hearts. In the Bible passage we just read from Deuteronomy, God specifically says, "You shall not be grieved when you give to Him." Selfishness attacks us before we give, and grief attacks us after we give. Often the reason a person grieves after giving is because of a false perspective that he is the owner, and not the steward, of his possessions. However, God is the owner because everything belongs to Him. In our short lives, we have the opportunity to steward various resources that come our way, but God already owns all of it.

If the teller at the bank handed you one hundred dollars from money already in your account, the bank would not grieve over giving it to you, because it already belongs to you. In the same way, when we give to God, we can do so without grieving if we realize that He already owns it. The fact is this: God doesn't bless giving. He blesses giving from the right attitude of our heart.

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God said He wants us not only to give, but also to be generous. The first time we are born in the natural, we are born selfish. Every parent knows children have to be taught how to share because they don't do it naturally. But when we are born again, we are born gener-ous. God wants us to be generous just as He is generous.

At the end of the Scripture passage in Deuteronomy 15, Moses says, "From what the Lord your God has blessed you with, you shall give to Him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I com-mand you this thing today" (Deuteronomy 15:14-15). Why did God instruct the Israelites to remember that they had been slaves? Because it would fill their hearts with gratitude for what He had done for them.

When we allow God to remind us that we used to be slaves to sin and that everything we have is by His gracious hand, this knowledge will help us to be grateful. And when we're grateful, it's easy to be generous. Genuine gratitude to God is a rare and powerful thing. And a heart of gratitude is a vital key to cultivating a lifestyle of generosity. When other people ask Debbie, "Why do you think Robert is so gen-erous?" Her answer is simple, "Because he's never gotten over getting saved. He's never forgotten where he came from. And he knows that everything we have came from the Lord." Always remember what God has done for you. It will make generosity a natural response from your heart.

Discussion Questions

1. In the past, what teaching did you hear about giving? Did these teachings have a positive or negative effect on you? Explain.
2. Read Luke 6:37-38: Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

People often equate this passage with money, yet money is not mentioned. Some have called this the "Spiritual Law of Reciprocity" - whatever you give (judgment, mercy, time, service) will be returned to you in abundance. What are some areas of your life

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where you've seen this "sowing and reaping" principle at work in the past - for either good or bad?

3. Why do you think people sometimes struggle with selfishness before giving and grief after they have given?
4. Can you think of a time you've struggled with either selfishness or grief when giving?
5. What are some practical ways you can work through those initial struggles in your heart and choose to have generosity with a grateful heart?
6. "Giving to get" seems to have become the standard approach many have taken to motivate believers to share. In what ways does the declaration "God doesn't bless giving; He blesses giving with the right heart" challenge what you have been taught in the past about giving?
7. People can give of their treasure, time, and talents. How does the way people spend their time, give of their treasure, and use their talents show where their heart is? In which of these areas are you the most generous? Which is the greatest challenge?