

Norman C. Schwab  
Yacolt EV Free  
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**Biblical Giving**  
Philippians 4:14-23

According to the Reuters news agency, a judge in London, England awarded a divorce to a 56 year old woman because her husband was a cheapskate. The wife complained that her husband was so cheap he charged her \$7.50 to repaint the living room of their London home. When the woman's married daughter came to visit on vacation, he demanded that she pay 8 cents everytime she used the shower. He collected 75 cents a week from his family to pay for the electricity consumed while they viewed television. The couple married in 1947 yet her husband still has refused to take her on a honeymoon let alone a vacation. In all their years of marriage, he has yet to give her a birthday present.

In good English style, the Judge granted the divorce noting the man had some very "peculiar ideas about family finance" That relationship died long before the formality of divorce..long before.

Now most of us would listen to this relationship and think. I've heard of folks like that. I'm sure glad I'm not in one of those. What an stingy, unloving, penny pincher. He probably made her pay for the paper she wrote notes to him on because it was her choice to initiate communication with him.

Most of us are thankfully more giving then that English gentleman. Most of us do not keep track of individuals drains and inputs to a relationship in such minute detail. Yet, the absurd illustrates a point that I struggle with in relationships...particularly in the area of giving and receiving.

We think and live in a world that has bought into the 50-50 relationship idea. You scratch my back...I'll scratch yours. If I feel like I'm doing more scratching then you are...then I'm not only going to loudly let you know...I'm going to make your life miserable and leave. No deposit no return. If you fail to put in then you might as well get out. We struggle with viewing our relationships as a deal, and if it isn't a good deal anymore then...forget it we are out.

This morning we are going to be talking about giving and receiving. We tend to give to others and expect to receive in return. We tend to withhold giving to others when we do not expect to get anything back in return. It's tough enough for a lot of us to give, but it's very difficult for us to receive well. We feel very uncomfortable when someone gives us something...especially when we know we cannot possibly pay them back. When we receive a gift, time money, a listening ear, help we automatically begin thinking ways that we can repay this person. We do not want to feel in debt to anyone. We fear possibly being manipulated by the giver. We are wary of the agenda of the giver...the expectations. Many times in families it seems there will be one member that wants to manipulate and control by giving or withholding gifts. We struggle with the whole concept of giving and receiving gifts, so it is not surprising we drag some of that baggage into our relationships with other believers.

The number one reason why people say they don't like coming to church is because the church is always asking for money. When the offering plate goes by some people feel guilty for not placing any money in. Many people give once a month and feel funny 3 of 4 Sundays during offering time thinking that everyone is watching and judging them. In reality no one is watching or even remotely concerned with whether they place something in or not but their is that feeling in yourself. I've felt it sitting in the front row. I'm sure people are wondering why don't I place a check in the offering plate. But, in reality no one is thinking that. Most people don't know that we have the treasurer take out a portion of our tithe from our monthly check for tax purposes...but I do not think anyone is sitting there condemning me. Yet..we struggle with our feeling sometimes. Why? How can we begin to retool our minds and begin thinking more biblically about giving and receiving? The world looks at giving and receiving and does everything it can to make sure things stay even..a 50-50 deal is ideal. The problem is 50 -50 deals are just that. A deal. A contract. It quickly becomes sterile and cold. Any life it may have had will quickly get strangled.How can we avoid the worldly thinking of guilt, regret, expectations, repayment, fairness and manipulation that revolve around giving? How can we as believers begin to rock the world model? This morning I wish to challenge our thinking in the area of Biblical giving and receiving.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4. It is a sad thing to get to the end of a great book. You wish the author would just keep writing...to stay with you just a little while longer..have another cup of coffee. But good-bys must come and Paul here in the last few verses says good-by to the people at the church of Philippi. His last four verses affirm the warmth he has in his heart for them and grants his richest blessing on them. But before he writes those closing good-by hugs, he has tacked on a thank-you note for their gift. A quick read might discount the note as nice but hardly worthy of much attention. But I believe Paul has not stopped teaching in these few verses. I believe there are some great things for us to learn about Biblical giving and receiving. As we read be looking for some principles for Biblical giving and receiving (READ).

Point number one. Biblical giving is compassionate. Nevertheless, refers to the previous famous verse where Paul affirms that God is the one who enables and gives strength to endure difficult circumstances. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. Now Paul balances that divine enablement, God help with the human tool of the Philippians. Guys you did well to give and be used by God. They shared in Paul's affliction. How do you do this? How can we share in another's affliction? I think most of us have experienced this. When a tragedy comes, a financial hardship, a difficult thing..when a friend comes alongside to encourage to listen to maybe give a hand. and here the Philippians assisted financially. That shared affliction is born from compassion, love. Biblical giving is compassionate. This is not pity. Pity looks down. Compassion doesn't look down. Compassion looks level. straight is the others eyes.

It is possible to give without loving. Most of us experience this last month when we wrote checks to the Internal Revenue Service. It's possible to give without loving, but one cannot love without giving. Biblical giving is born by the wings of love and compassion. The Philippian church became aware of the need and responded. Paul writes that it was good they gave and were used as a tool in God's hand. God has chosen to use others to give what we need to make it through difficult circumstances. It is poor thinking on our part to think that if we let others wallow in their affliction they will become more spiritual

because of it. If God calls on us to show compassion on another then we must. Deprivation is not necessarily good or more godly. Biblical giving begins with love.

Point #2 Biblical giving is generous. Look at verses 15-16. The people of Philippi gave to Paul when no one else did. They gave to Paul even when they were not the direct recipients of his ministry. They received no direct benefit..but they gave. That is both compassionate and generous. Unlike that stingy English husband who wanted keep minute detail of costs incurred by his wife on his bank account, and if it was not benefiting him in any way he refused to pay for it...the Philippians were generous. They gave to Paul when he was not even in the country. He had no possible way to repay them for their gift.

Biblical giving is? compassionate. Generous..and in verse 17 we see that Biblical giving is an investment. Point #3 A spiritual investment. Paul is so other centered in his thank-you. He thanked them for the gift but then tells them what excites him most about the gift they gave. Most important to Paul is to see their spiritual life grow. He wants to see the profit in their spiritual lives evidenced by their compassionate and generous and sacrificial giving to others. Paul is excited because their giving shows that God is doing some great things in their hearts. Biblical giving is an investment that somehow does more for giver than the one who receives the gift. People are always more important to Paul than money-profit, he wants to see gains and dividends on spiritual profit.

Some of us have given gifts of time, energy or maybe money and have watched it being wasted by the one we gave it to. Maybe your gift was ignored or left unused. It would be easy for the giver to say to himself, Why did I ever give that. Why did you give to that guy on the corner what a waste. I'll never do that again. It is easy to get frustrated thinking your gift is wasted. But, Paul says the greatest investment may not be in the one who receives the gift but in the giver himself.

How could the giver benefit? There is something inside that begins to work when we give expecting and desiring nothing in return. Even famous psychiatrist Dr. Karl Menniger has caught onto this biblical principle. He tells his clients that are depressed, lonely, discouraged to walk out their door, lock it behind them and then go walk across the railroad tracks and give help out to someone in need who can't pay them

back. Biblical giving is not looking for a good deal or something in return. Biblical giving is born by compassion, it is generous and a spiritual investment..often profiting the giver more than the receiver. The more that we give away the more Christ is able to possess and therefore the more we possess.

Point #4. Biblical giving is an act of worship. Look at verse 18. In the first half of the verse we see that Paul is praising the quantity of the gift. It was generous. Then he praises the quality of the gift in the last half of the verse. It was a gift filled with worship to God.

Did you catch the picture that Paul is trying to create in the minds of the readers. Paul writes about the gift being, a fragrant aroma, acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. This would flood the mind of the New Testament reader with pictures of the Jewish sacrifices, temples and priests. These offerings to God were said to be a soothing fragrant aroma to His nostrils. As the sacrificial smoke and incense went up into the heavens, God was pleased that his people were affirming their loyalty to Him and worshipping Him. Paul says when we give to others in a compassionate, generous, not looking for something in return...giving because of our love for God. It is an act of worship and smells like a soothing and fragrant aroma in His nostrils.

When the Old Testament believers would sacrifice a perfect unblemished best of their crops to God, they were giving back to God part of what they valued most earth. Giving God something that was important to them was an act of giving, worship. When we give a portion of something we value, time, emotional energy, money not expecting a deal in return...in fact it become an act of worship to God.

We are not bound by duty because God loves the cheerful giver. Each gift given was an act of faith. Each gift given is a decision to place oneself in dependence of God relying on God to supply their needs, instead of retaining that gift for selfish reasons. Because giving is an act of worship, the fragrance of ones giving is a barometer, a spiritual barometer that measures the reality of ones heart devotion to God. Here Paul sees his gift from the Philippians as an evidence that God was indeed at work in their hearts. Now the amount one gives depends on ones ability. C.S. Lewis said," I do not believe that we could settle on how much we ought to give, the only safe rule to depend on would be to give

more than we ought. That is the sacrificial element to giving. Biblical giving to others is in fact an act of worship to God. When we forget that is when we struggle.

Lets look for just a moment at this famous verse 19. Here we see that God is the adequate supplier of needs. Note it does not say "My God shall supply all your greeds." but legitimate needs. I think that God in his wisdom will determine which are legitimate needs and which our greeds. Sometimes the creation of need will determine how God chooses to supply those needs. Sometimes we create need by sin. Laziness, extravagance, overly risky speculation. Needs will be supplied to people from God for a purpose. If God believes a lesson would be better learned by them struggling...He may choose to let you struggle for a while. But in that educational struggle God is supplying a need for you to learn greater self-discipline, a stronger work ethic, balance in ones financial decisions. God is a supplier of needs. To supply means to adequately fill up what is missing. Supplies are not extras, not luxuries, just what is needed to get the job done. In the context of Philippians 4, My God will supply what is needed to endure the difficult circumstances. Paul writes of a personal God. "My" The adequate supplier is not some distant donor. He is not only able verse 13 he is willing. He shall. His provision has no limits. Physical, spiritual, mental, financial, relational, for guidance, strength, health, courage, food, employment. He is the adequate supplier that extends past the temporal toward the eternal. How limited are the riches of God? How limited is His glory? He will supply in a-chord. in harmony, n proportion to His unlimited resources. When is one restfully content? Not necessarily when one has completed, sat down and is doing nothing. One can be content in the midst of activity, even difficult things if he knows that the resources to do the job, the resources to get through the trial are adequate. If you are unsure that the supplier is adequate it will only bring tension and stress. Knowing we have what it will take to make it through bring great rest and contentment.

Biblical giving is compassionate, generous, a spiritual investment and an act of worship to God. So what implications does that have for the giver? When we give to others in ways that expect a return, we are diluting the fragrance of our offering to God. When we attempt to control or manipulate by our gift, when gifts are given with strings tied to them,

they become a stench in God's nose. If one is trying to manipulate others or God by their giving...don't bother giving...please just keep the gift, the time, the energy. If you know your attitude is not right, do not give under compulsion. Maybe you feel this way and don't want to confess your struggle to God. Pray to God to change your heart but don't give out of duty. Duty bound giving is not worship. I would encourage to do something else with your gift. Buy that boat, take a vacation, whatever...but don't give begrudgingly, or guilt driven, or give with regret. Giving is an act of worship. Your worship to God. As we begin to see our gift as an act of devotion and worship to God...the guilt drops away. It doesn't matter anymore what people are wondering about your giving habits. You don't have to avoid giving when you don't think you'll get anything back...because you're not expecting anything in return. You aren't giving it to people you are worshipping God. When people are hesitant to receive your gift you can say please accept this gift unconditionally, no strings I do not want you to dilute the fragrance of my worship to God by thinking I may get paid back sometime. What a freedom for the one who is giving. What release and joy. It strips away the contract, the business deal and replaces it with life and contagious joy, compassion and love.

What are the implications for the receiver. Paul was the one who received the gift here. When we protest a gift given to us. When we immediately begin telling them we plan to repay them, we in fact are denying their act of worship to God. We are actually believing the gift came from a person and not from God. Paul thankfully accepted their gift as their act of worship to God. Paul let them know that the gift was more than adequate. He wasn't looking for the gift itself. He wasn't manipulating for another handout. Paul the gift receiver could be content knowing that the resources of the Supplier are adequate. The biblical receiver recognizes that it is all God's anyway and he will sit in the chair of contentment knowing that he is the one who will move the resources around. This giver doesn't have to try and pay back someone or even try to pay back God..How could we possibly do that. Let us return the gift to being what it really is. A gift. Rested comfort comes knowing that the Supplier's resources are adequate. He knows what we need. He is able and willing.

