

Generosity

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth” (Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2; KJV).

INTRODUCTION

The Lord is the ultimate source of all good things, and He is generous beyond measure. He expects us, as His sons and daughters, to be generous.

... the righteous giveth and spareth not (Proverbs 21:26; KJV).

Throughout the Bible, we are commanded to share the first benefits of our labor—our harvest, our salary, our profits—with the Lord. But, of course, who can give Him anything who owns everything? Our gifts are for His kingdom here under the sun, to promote His cause here on earth.

Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine (Proverbs 3:9, 10; KJV).

I. GIVING BLESSES

Here is another paradox: Liberality—the giving of our money, goods, labor—actually serves to multiply and enrich both our financial security and our reputation, whereas stinginess tends to erode both (see Proverbs 22:9; Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2).

One man gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. A liberal man will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered (Proverbs 11:24, 25; RSV).

II. HOARDING HURTS

There are two special kinds of withholding that Solomon said hurt a man’s reputation: hoarding necessities and making vain promises.

The people will curse the man who holds back the grain, but a blessing will be on the head of the one selling it (Proverbs 11:26; MLB).

Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain (Proverbs 25:14; KJV).

Solomon advised against accepting a gift from a miserly man when he offers it. Your gratitude means nothing to him. He is a hypocrite, already calculating how to force it back from you, perhaps with interest.

Do not eat the bread of the man who is stingy: do not desire his delicacies; for he is like one who is inwardly reckoning. “Eat and drink!” he says to you; but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the morsels which you have eaten, and waste your pleasant words (Proverbs 23:6-8; RSV).

III. ASSISTING THE POOR

It is not only a responsibility but a privilege to give to the deserving poor, to help him climb out of the pit of poverty. Solomon said the Lord will repay the liberal man for his kindness (see Proverbs 14:31; 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; 28:27).

... he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he (Proverbs 14:21; KJV).

And Jesus said:

It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35; RSV).

IV. WHEN NOT TO GIVE

But Paul warned against supporting indolence:

... we gave you this command: If anyone will not work, let him not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10; RSV).

Solomon said it was inadvisable to give to the rich, no matter how noble one’s motives. Like oppressing the poor, those who do will only suffer loss in the end.

... he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want (Proverbs 22:16; KJV).

Agur wrote these words:

The leech has two daughters: "Give, give," they cry. Three things are never satisfied; four never says, "Enough": Sheol, the barren womb, the earth ever thirsty for water, and the fire which never says, "Enough" (Proverbs 30:15, 16; RSV).

This saying is not clear to me, but perhaps it refers to certain kinds of people who beg perpetually. Sheol and the barren womb represent the end and the beginning of the cycle of life which goes on perpetually. Rain falls upon the earth, never satisfying its need, and a fire would live forever if it was kept fed. Whenever one

gives to some people, they always come back for more, never satisfied. They are a type of sinner who preys upon other people in a more insidious parasitic fashion—the leeches of society.

CONCLUSION

God does not need man's money, but man needs to give. We cannot grow without giving. Giving is the royal route to maturity before God.

Give that you may grow! Give that you may glorify God! Give that you may receive God's best!

—Walter Porter

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