

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *Re-Finance: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Money Management* these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

Introduction: Do you consider yourself a conservative or a liberal? When it comes to giving, liberal giving ought to characterize the follower of Jesus.

Christianity is a religion of giving. Christians are givers. Why? God is a giver. God has given us victory, peace, hope, life, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, strength, health, wealth, honor, power, love, a heart to know him, songs in the night, joy in the morning, answers to prayer, food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, rest to the weary, eternal life, living water, a new birth, the crown of life, the light of heaven, the Word of God, and, His greatest gift, His Son.

And we, His children, are never more like God than when we give. Have some of us become so conservative that we are no longer liberal in our giving? Here are three reasons why we should give money generously.

1. The benefit of generosity (vv. 24-25).

These verses present the superabundant return on generosity. Picture someone spraying water on others on a hot, dry day with the cool spray coming back on them. That's the benefit.

A physics law says there is an equal and opposite reaction for every action. God's reaction to our generosity is never equal. God does not benefit givers in equal proportions, but far, far more. When it comes to a return on giving God is not fair. He is more than generous. God promises not to give an equal exchange but a return that is super-abundant, bigger and better.

This promise is found throughout scripture. Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you; a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over—will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38). God said through the prophet Malachi: "'Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this way,' says the LORD of Hosts. 'See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure'" (Mal. 3:10).

R. G. LeTourneau, inventor of earthmoving machines, gave away 90 percent of his income. But the money came in faster than he could give it away. LeTourneau once said, "I shovel it out and God shovels it back—but God has a bigger shovel."

Financial planner Ralph Doudera wrote in his book *Wealth Conundrum*, "I found out over the years that the more I gave, the more I made." (p. 116 *Wealth Conundrum*.)

2. The blessing of generosity (vv. 26-27).

Curses come to those who hoard. Obscenities will be uttered toward those who are stingy. Evil comes to those who look for trouble. Blasphemy comes to those who do not give to ones in need.

One wonders if the Apostle John had this proverb in mind when he wrote about sharing what one has with others in need. “If anyone has this world’s goods and sees his brother in need but closes his eyes to his need—how can God’s love reside in him?” (1 John 3:17).

Blessings, on the other hand, come to those who are generous. The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed. The one who helps others is graciously helped. The one who is good is lavishly favored.

Giving primes the pump for God’s generosity. Throughout scripture a correlation exists between our generosity with this world’s resources and the blessings of God both in this life and the life to come. We don’t give because we want to get something in return. We give because we have already gotten it. We are so blessed already, there is no way in the world we would ever be able to repay it. We give out of gratitude for the unbelievable blessings that we have. We give to show our love for God who has given us so many good and precious gifts. We give as a tangible fulfillment of our responsibility to love and to help others. We give for the rewards that are promised when we seek God’s kingdom to expand.

Solomon emphasized this truth: “Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor” (Proverbs 14:21 ESV). If we are generous toward others, God will heap blessings on us. Not because He has to, but because He has graciously promised to. It may not be in the way we expect; we might not always reap cash for cash. But we will definitely reap. The God who promised we won’t lose our reward for giving a cup of cold water to a disciple won’t fail to bless us when we are generous to others, especially to the poor. God may bless you financially or he may simply fill your cup with joy. Who doesn’t want joy?

We want blessings not curses.

3. The belief of generosity (vv. 28-29).

The generous person believes that God will take care of them. They do not trust in money, but rather they have staked their conviction on God’s care of them.

Every day we make a choice: Will we trust our money or will we trust God? If we trust our riches we are more apt to hoard our wealth. If we trust God we are more apt to be generous.

If we trust God—that faith—yields two rewards:

A. We will flourish.

Solomon says we will flourish like foliage on a tree. As the leaves spring forth providing shade in the summer then turn the beautiful shades of autumn in the fall, so will our lives display righteousness, a life that benefits man and honors God.

The one who is not generous, trusting in his riches, will not flourish. They “will inherit the wind” or be left with nothing or something that cannot be grasped.

Generous people flourish.

Shel Silverstein in his delightful book, *The Giving Tree*, describes such a generous tree and his love for a boy. The young boy played in the tree. When he grew up the tree gave him apples to sell in order to make money. Then the tree allowed the boy to cut his branches to build a home. Then the tree allowed the boy to cut his trunk to build a boat. And, as an old man the tree, continuing to give, gave the man a stump to lean and rest on. And, the tree was happy.

B. We will be wise.

The wise heart is the generous heart.

George Bailey in the movie *It's a Wonderful Life* had given of his time, resources, and money time and time again to the citizens of Bedford Falls. When he was on the brink of destitution, they came to his aid, following his example, and gave to him. Because he was wise in giving, he was paid back when he needed it most.

Giving generously heaps far more rewards than miserly hoarding what we have. Give money generously.

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