

# The Gift of Giving

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of giving generously and joyfully, following the example of Jesus and motivated by love.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 25:2, Deuteronomy 15:7-10, Psalm 54:6, Proverbs 19:17, Malachi 3:8-10, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 6:38, Acts 1:8, Romans 12:8, 2 Corinthians 9:7

**Topics:** "Generosity", "The Gift of Giving"

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## Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the significance of the gift of giving as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power in believers. He illustrates how Jesus exemplified selfless giving, urging Christians to give without strings attached and with simplicity, reflecting God's generosity towards us. Smith warns against ostentatious giving and highlights that true giving should stem from a willing heart, motivated by love, and not out of pressure or obligation. He encourages believers to embrace the joy of giving, assuring them that God rewards those who give cheerfully and sacrificially. Ultimately, Smith calls for a generous spirit that reflects God's love and grace in our lives.

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## Transcript

In Romans 8 Paul gives us a further listing of the gifts of the Spirit. As believers we have one inlet of power and that is the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8 NKJV). And the Holy Spirit is power in the life of the believer. But this power has several outlets and one of the outlets of power is in giving.

Now again, Jesus left an example for us that we should follow in His steps. We know how fully and completely Jesus gave Himself for us, setting a standard or setting the model for us. He is the standard and model for forgiveness. We are to forgive even as He has forgiven us. He is the standard and model for love. We are to love even as He has loved us. And He is our standard and model for giving. Christ gave Himself as a ransom for our sins. And so one of the gifts of the Spirit is the gift of giving. So Paul tells us that "he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity" (Romans 12:8).

You know, there are those who, when they give, make their giving so complicated. Many times there are strings attached to it. Years ago a family gave a rocking chair to our church in Tucson--a rocking chair which we really did not want. It was sort of worn out but they gave it to the church. And my immediate thought was, "We have to get rid of this thing," because the only place we had to put it was in our living room and it just did not go with anything. But then we found out that they did not want us to get rid of it. It

had belonged to "aunt somebody" and she had given it to them and they did not want it or need it. However, they did not want to get rid of it because it had sentimental value to it, so they decided to give it to the church. But it was not given with simplicity because there was this condition attached to it--"You can not get rid of it." Often when a person explains all of the conditions that go along with the gift I will say, "Well you know, maybe you just ought to keep it." There are too many conditions.

Now Paul said if we have this gift of giving we should exercise it with simplicity. We should not make a lot of rules or a lot of things to go along with the gift but just give it. And then, if they decide they do not want it, and we want to give to somebody else, that is fine. Even if they decide because we do not want it they will junk it, then at least they saved you from discarding it. But we are to just give with no strings attached--giving with simplicity.

There are some people who are very ostentatious in their giving. Jesus mentioned that when we give, we should not be as the Pharisees who loved to sound a trumpet before them. Now I do not know if Jesus was just using that as kind of a figure of speech or if they actually did have bands going in front of them when they were taking their gift into the temple. But I have seen some people who give in such an ostentatious way that they draw everybody's attention to the gift that they have given.

The gift of giving is certainly a beautiful and a wonderful gift. We know of people who model the phrase, "he would give you the shirt off of his back." And we know people like that, who are just so giving. There are some people with whom you just cannot really express admiration for anything they have because if you do, you will find it sent to you in a box. I mean they just have the gift of giving.

We had a fellow around here who the Lord has taken home. But he lived down in Laguna Beach and he had the gift of giving. And one night, as he was walking home in Laguna, a fellow came alongside and stuck a gun in his ribs and said, "Give me everything you have!" And he apologized. He said, "I am sorry I only have five dollars. Will you take a check?" Now that is the gift of giving!

Those persons who have the gift of giving always have many friends. In a proverb it says, "Every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts." We love generous people. But God loves generous people. Think how generous God is with us, and has been to us.

The word give and its cognate forms is used in the Bible 1,981 times. So it should make you think that God has a lot to say about giving. But the interesting thing, as you go through and look at all of these references, is that by far the vast majority are references to what God has given us. These references are probably on a ratio of about five to one. Most of the references on giving in the Bible are referring to what God has given unto us.

It is not always those who have a lot who have the gift of giving. Sometimes they do and sometimes they do not. There was a man and he became very wealthy. His name was R. G. Levterno and back in the '40s and '50s he designed and invented a lot of heavy-duty, earth-moving equipment. He was a very sharp and innovative fellow. When he started his business he made a covenant to give God ten percent of everything they made, that is, of all his profits. As time went on and he began to be blessed more and more he made a new covenant with God to give Him twenty percent.

You know, sometimes as a person increases in wealth, they sort of decrease the percentage of giving. Giving a dime out of a dollar is not very much; after all, it is only a dime! But if you have made \$100,000 then \$10,000 seems like a big amount. And if you make a million, then \$100,000 is ten percent! And the

more you make, the more you are prone to say, "Well, maybe five percent because after all..." Isn't that interesting? Hardly anybody has a problem giving a dime out of a dollar. It is only when it grows that it becomes difficult.

But Levterno did it the other way and as the business increased, he gave twenty percent. And as the business continued to increase he then raised it to thirty, then forty, then fifty, then sixty percent. And when he went home to be with the Lord he was giving ninety percent unto the Lord and to the Lord's work all over the world. Ninety percent! Of course, God had so blessed him that the ten percent which he kept was more than you make anyhow. But God just will not be out-given.

My wife is an extremely generous person. She has the gift of giving. She is always slipping money to people. And she was doing that even when we did not have it. I used to get upset with her, but the interesting thing is that there are times when God lays upon my heart to give extra and she has never once objected to anything that I wanted to give to the Lord or to someone else. In fact, she usually says, "Well, do you think that is enough? You know, they are really needy She has that gift of giving.

Now the Bible tells us several things concerning our giving, as far as how we are to give. First of all, we are to give willingly from our hearts. When the children of Israel were going to make the tabernacle, God gave to Moses the design of the various instruments that were to be used. It was to be made of silver and gold that was to cover the ark of the covenant and the cherubim. And it was going to take a lot of silver, a lot of gold, and a lot of special types of cloth. And so, the Lord spoke unto Moses in Exodus 25:2,

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.

Now God did not want anybody to give who was not giving willingly or giving from their heart. God never wants a person to feel pressured in giving to Him. Whatever you give to God, you should always give willingly and from your heart. And you should only give that which you can give willingly from your heart.

Now the beautiful thing about this is that the people had a heart to give. And as a result, the people began to bring in their gold and their silver and their jewelry to make this tabernacle. And one thing that I think is really special, for materials for the brazen altar the women gave their mirrors which were made of highly-polished brass.

But they spoke to Moses finally, those who were counting and weighing all the gifts. And they spoke to Moses and said, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to work." So Moses had to give a commandment and caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp saying, "Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary" (Exodus 36:6-7). And so they had to restrain the people from bringing any more. The stuff that they had was sufficient for all the work in order to make the sanctuary.

They actually gave too much! Now that is the spirit of giving. When God moves upon the hearts of people to give, it really is an exciting thing. Because when we open up our hearts to give unto the Lord it is beautiful.

Now from a negative side concerning our giving, it should never be done out of pressure or grudgingly. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, "According as he hath purposed in his heart, so let him give." We are not to give out of constraint, but just as we have purposed in our own hearts.

There are a lot of churches, actually, that put pressure on people to give. During the month that they seek to raise the church budget, usually the most influential people will go around and visit the church members in their homes. And they send these three very important people--maybe a doctor, and a lawyer, and a banker--usually those are the kind of men you want on your financial committee. They will come to your house and they will sit there and they will say, "Now you know, this is the church's budget for the coming year. And these are the things that we want to do for the Lord. Now how much can we count on you to pledge this year towards the church's budget? And as you make your pledge we encourage you to use faith--make a faith pledge unto God."

And often they encourage you to give more than what you can actually afford to give. They encourage you to make this faith pledge. And then, as the year goes on and some of the people's faith is "not what it should have been" and they do not have the funds to give, the church then begins to send out duns and say, "You know it has been three months and we have not received your pledge for the last three months. We are depending on you." And the congregation really then begins to feel tremendous pressure to give; but then as they give it is usually with a feeling of resentment and animosity.

And that is really a shame because now if you are giving to God out of animosity or if you are giving to God out of a sense of pressure, you begin to think, "Oh, I cannot stand it. They are sending me these letters. That is horrible. I must get it in so then they will not send me any more. I do not want them calling on me." That is tragic because when you give out of that kind of motive, God will not bless it. God does not want it and you lose the blessing of giving.

The blessing comes from cheerful giving. It comes when I give willingly from my heart; and then I am blessed. I give out of love for the Lord and because I love Him, I want to do something special. I am often feeling like, "Oh, Lord, You have done so much. I just want to do something special and make a sacrifice." And I am just loving Him as I do it. Then God blesses that and God honors that.

Surely Jesus indicated that it is not the amount that is given (in Mark 12) as He was watching with His disciples and the people were putting their money in the treasury offering. And the wealthy were coming with all their pomp and circumstance and glory, putting in their large gifts. Then one little widow came up and dropped in a quarter of a cent. And Jesus turned to His disciples, and said, "Did you see that? She gave more than all the rest--because they just gave from their surplus. This woman gave her very livelihood. That is all she had." In the Lord's eyes it is not the amount that is given, it is the heart that is behind the giving and what it has cost you to give.

Interestingly, the Lord loves sacrificial giving and this is something that seems quite rare. But if a person has the gift of giving, they really do not think of it as a sacrifice. They think, "Oh, praise the Lord! I am glad I can give."

The Bible says, "As a person has purposed in his own heart, so let him give." This is something between you and God. Paul says, "For God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). The Greek word for cheerful is a little more intense and would better be translated "hilarious." God loves a hilarious giver.

And then, we are to give freely. Jesus said, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). The psalmist said, "I will freely sacrifice unto Thee. I will praise Thy name, O Lord, for it is good" (Psalm 54:61).

And finally our giving must be motivated by love. Whether we are giving to God or giving to someone in need, it must be motivated by love because Paul said,

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:3)

If I go out and sell everything I have and give all the money to the poor, yet do so out of resentment and if I am not doing it out of love--if there is some other motive, maybe to be seen of men, to be recognized--it does not profit me anything.

Now we are to give, first of all, to God. But you might reasonably ask, "What in the world could I ever give to God?" And surely there is nothing that you can give to God that He actually needs. I like that Scripture where God said, "If I were hungry I would not come to you for a handout." He said, "For the cattle on a thousand hills are Mine" (Psalm 50:10). In other words, God is saying, "I am not broke. I am not destitute. And if I were, I would not come to you."

What do we give to God? Six times the Bible tells us to give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endures forever. Now if the Bible tells us to do something once, I so believe the Word of God that I think that we ought to do it--even if the Bible just tells us once. If it tells us twice then we should really pay attention. But if God tells us six times, then we really need to pay full attention. Give thanks unto the Lord! Have you given thanks to God today? Have you given thanks to God this week? Oh, that there would go forth from our lips continually thanksgiving unto God for His goodness.

Three times we are told to give to Him the glory that is due His name. Now the name of God is Yahweh. And we are told that the name of the LORD (Yahweh) is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe. And the Bible tells us that God honors His word above His name, but His name is so held in esteem that the Jews will not even attempt to pronounce it. Now give unto the Lord the glory that is due His name. His name means "the Becoming One" and speaks of God becoming to you whatever your need might be. How gracious God is! Whatever your need might be tonight, God becomes to you exactly what that need is. And so, the name of the Lord--give glory due His name.

And then we are to give to the poor. God gave commandment in the law concerning the poor in Deuteronomy 15 where He said,

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. (Deuteronomy 15:7-8)

Now wanteth does not mean "desires," but that which a person is lacking or needing.

Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. (Deuteronomy 15:9-10)

God promises to bless you if you will do this. But then He said,

For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. (Deuteronomy 15:10)

In other words, you will always have an opportunity to exercise your gift of giving.

Mike feeds the poor people down at his church. They invite the people to come in and they have a cafeteria and they simply feed them. That is glorious. It is glorious!

Now regarding the results of giving, Jesus said,

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:38)

Paul said,

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

Now that makes sense. This is sowing and reaping. If you go out to plant a field of corn and you want to be very frugal in the planting of the seed, you might decide to put each seed in about two feet apart instead of six inches--but then you will have a sparse crop. If you sow sparingly, you are going to reap sparingly. But if you sow bountifully, you will reap bountifully. Now this is God's law of giving.

And a lot of times we have difficulty understanding the spiritual laws and how they work. Many times because we do not understand how these things can possibly work, we will just say, "Well I am not going to do that. I do not understand how that works." But do you understand how electricity works? Probably not! But you sure do not mind using it even though you do not understand how it works.

And the same is true with these spiritual laws of God because we do not understand the principle. We know the law of gravity. We know that mass attracts; but why it attracts, we do not really know. We can measure the force of the attraction, and we know that the larger the mass the greater attraction--but why? We do not really know, but we recognize that this is a law of nature and so we are very careful to obey it. We are not jumping off of twelve-story buildings because we respect the law of gravity. I do not know exactly how it works. Why do I drop to the ground? Why can't I fly? Why can't I just float? I do not understand how it works but I have enough sense to respect it. And with these spiritual laws of God, and certainly in giving, we are dealing with some spiritual laws that we cannot really understand but would be wise to respect them.

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:38)

So you who are giving it out in teaspoons will get it back in teaspoons. You who give it with a shovel, you will get it back with a shovel. Give it out with a skip loader; you will get it back with a skip loader. The measure that you use to mete it out determines how it will be measured back.

In Romans 11:35, Paul asks the question,

Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

In other words, he is saying, "Show me a case where a man has given to God where God did not give it back." It was recompensed to him again.

I have heard people say, "Well we just cannot afford to tithe." Well, I tell you what--"I cannot afford not to tithe." All that I have is God's and if He only claims a tenth as His, I will not challenge Him by failing to tithe it.

But God said, "Will a man rob God?" And the people responded, "Wherein have we robbed God?" And Malachi the prophet said, "You have robbed Him in the tithes and offerings." And then God said, "See if I will not pour out onto you a blessing that you cannot contain" (cf. Malachi 3:8-10).

If we will give to God what is God's and what God requires, then God has promised that He would pour out blessings that we cannot contain. It will come back to us many times over again. "Who has first given to Him and it was not recompensed to him again?" So it may be that you do not have the gift of giving and it may be that you really do not want to pray for that gift. But I would encourage you to do so.

Now again, in giving to the poor there is one other Scripture that I did not bring up and that is in Proverbs. It says, "He that giveth unto the poor." And God said, "I'll pay it back" (cf. Proverbs 19:17). Is that interesting? Would you like to lend some money to God? You know He pays great interest. "And he who gives to the poor lends to the Lord" and God says, "I will take care of it. I will pay it back." Why don't you try it?

Now, I would not go around looking for someone who has a sign "Will work for money." I think that that is a racket. But you know, we have a lot of single moms here in the church who are really having a hard time. They love the Lord and they are going through some really rough times. Some of these women are going without food--some of them. They are the kind I would like to see helped. We would just be lending to the Lord and seeing what God will do.

You see giving is something, as the Scripture said, is a matter of a person purposing in his own heart what he wants to do. It is never to be from pressure, never by constraint or force, but it is something in your own heart where God speaks to you and God begins to minister to you and lays it upon your heart. He begins to give you that gift of giving. If you will respond to it, you will find that God will give you more to give--like R. G. Levterno.

It just keeps growing. And God will give you more and more to give as you learn the blessing of giving. Start out small if you need to, but do it--even a little bit to learn the blessing and the rewards of giving. It is a spiritual law. I cannot tell you how it works all I can tell you is that it does work. I know that. It works. And so, I would encourage you to just start and see what God will do because He has promised that if you give it will be given to you, measured out, pressed down, running over.

May the Lord be with you, bless you, give you a generous heart, and make you a hilarious giver, so that you might know the joy and the blessings of seeing God's work and God's reward to those who do give.

Praise is another thing we can give to God. I think sometimes we try and just sort of buy out our obligation. Well, I give money, you know. God wants more than that. And just consider other things that you might be able to give to God: time, service, energy, or whatever. This is about giving to God and experiencing then the reward, the joy, and the blessing of having a part and a share in God's work and in God's kingdom.

Shall we pray?

Father, help us. You have blessed us so much and we thank You for that. Lord, we have such an abundance and we thank You for that. But help us not to close up our hearts to those who are in need. But

give us a generous heart, Lord. Give us the gift of giving. And may we see that it goes far beyond just the material things, Lord, but may we give our time. May we give our energies. May we give of ourselves to help and to strengthen those who are weak, and minister to those who have difficulty ministering to their own needs. Lord, just make us giving people, so that we might bring glory to You. As a church, Lord, may we just honor You and glorify You through our being what You would have us to be--a medium whereby, Lord, we can give unto those who are in need and thus honor and glorify You. And Lord, when we do it, help us, Lord, to do it with cheerful hearts and willingly from our hearts. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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