

# (Gifts) the Gift of Giving

by Dwight Pentecost

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*The gift of giving is a spiritual gift that involves using one's material possessions to meet the needs of others, motivated by love and unselfishness.*

**Duration:** 28:16

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 6:17

**Topics:** "Gifts"

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## Description

In this sermon, Dr. Paul emphasizes the importance of having a willing and generous attitude towards material possessions. He explains that God cannot give someone the gift of giving if they are unwilling to share or distribute what they have. This unwillingness to give can lead to poverty. Dr. Paul also highlights the responsibility of being a good steward of the gifts God has given, and warns against being selfish or greedy with material possessions.

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## Transcript

Good evening and welcome to Conference Pulpit and the concluding message from Dr. Dwight Pentecost in a series of messages concerning spiritual gifts. This evening he'll be tackling the gift of giving. Dr. Dwight Pentecost has taught for many years at Dallas Theological Seminary and has a vast knowledge of the Bible.

Well, let's join him this evening for his gift of giving. The Apostle Paul writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6.10 says, "...the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, which while some coveted after, they have heard from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Many of us realize the danger of the love of money. We have come to view it as something that is tainted and offensive to God, and consequently, because of the danger involved in loving money, have come to despise it.

And yet, when we turn to the twelfth chapter of the Epistle of the Romans, we discover that money is associated with one of the spiritual gifts, and money that may be turned to such devilish ends may also be used in the exercise of one of the important spiritual gifts with a view to nurturing and sustaining the body. Paul writes in Romans chapter 12 and verse 8, in the middle of the verse, "...he that giveth let him do it with simplicity." And again in verse 13, he instructs distributing to the necessity of saints, and giving and distributing have in view the use of one's material possessions. And in this catalog of spiritual gifts, the Apostle mentions a gift that may very easily be overlooked.

The gift of giving. The blessings that God has provided for his creatures may all, without exception, be perverted or prostituted. It is the responsibility of the child of God, in the use of those things that God has given, to learn how to use them without abusing them, to use them wisely rather than to deny that they have any use because of the danger inherent in the perversion of the use of these things.

And I dare say that many, giving attention to biblical teaching on spiritual gifts, have never really considered that the use of material things was a responsibility to God, and that God gave some an ability to use funds for the good of the body and for the edifying of the church. And yet I find that the gift of giving, or of distributing to the necessity of the saints, is listed by the Apostle among the other edifying gifts. And if there must be in any assembly of believers those who have this gift so that there should be completeness and fullness and soundness in the body, it behooves us to give attention to what Scripture says about the exercise of that gift.

Now, when we come to consider this gift, there are certain things that I think should be brought to our attention. And first of all, we suggest that in order to exercise this gift, the gift of giving, one must have something to give. It is quite obvious that a poverty-stricken person could not exercise the gift of giving, because this gift is not associated with desire or intention, but it is associated with the actual distribution of material things that pass from one individual to another individual.

And I find this principle stated in 1 John 3, verse 17, where, speaking concerning love of the brethren, John writes, "'Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother of need, and shutteth up his vows of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' The first phrase here is a key phrase, "'He that hath this world's goods.'" He must have something to distribute before God can use him as one who would meet another man's needs. And if there are those in the assembly in need, the need must be met, or the whole body will suffer. But one who may recognize a need, but has nothing to give to meet that need, cannot be the one to exercise this spiritual gift.

We might wish we had the means to give when we see a need, but again I say the desire to see a need met does not mean that we are God's gift to the church to exercise the gift of giving. We must have something to give. If a man has that which he can give, before he becomes God's gift to the church to exercise the gift of giving, he must have love for the brethren.

And apart for love for the brethren, there could not be the exercise of the gift of giving. I notice again in 1 John 3, 17, John writes, "'Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother, his brother hath need.'" And as John uses the term brother, he is writing to one who is a member of the family of God. So here is one member who becomes acquainted with the need of another member.

They are bound together in love of Christ. And if an individual is not motivated by the love of Christ, there will never come the exercise of the gift of giving." I think we see this again in Romans chapter 12 and verse 10, where after he has mentioned some of the spiritual gifts, he that exhorted on exhortation, he that giveth let him do it with simplicity, says, "'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another.'" Now, what the apostle is stating is that in the exercise of any gift, the gift must be exercised in love. This would particularly be true in the gift of giving.

For one sees a need, and then love prompts him to give, so that love is that which produces the exercise of the gift of giving. Now, related to this concept of love is the concept of unselfishness. One who is selfish with that which God has entrusted to him can never exercise the gift of giving.

On the one hand, there must be love, but if there is a competition in affection, love for the brethren, as opposed to love for the material things a man possesses, his love for material things may equip his love for the brethren, so that just love for the brethren is not enough. That is a positive sign. There must be the alternative.

He does not love the material things that have been entrusted to his stewardship. I think this is inferred when Paul writes, for instance, in Titus chapter 1 and verse 7. Although he is speaking about qualifications for elders, he makes a point that is applicable here. The elder or bishop must be blameless as the steward of God.

The one who is set apart as an elder has received that from God for which he is responsible, and he must be blameless in the exercise of that stewardship or responsibility. And then he says, for instance, he must not be given to wine. Wine is a blessing that has come from God as man partakes of the abundance of the fatness of the great.

But if that which God has given is misused, the man is blamable as a steward of God's gift. Then he goes on to say, not given to filthy lucre, and the material things that the man has are a gift from God. A man must be blameless in that stewardship, and if he is selfish in that which God has given him, he will be chargeable before God.

He will be full of blame, for he will not be found blameless. This is illustrated further in 1 Timothy, chapter 6, and verse 10, which we read a moment ago. The love of money is the root of all evil, which while some are coveted after, they have heard from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many souls.

Covetousness moves into the realm of affection. It's the expression of a desire to have. The man who desires to have, or desires to hold, is essentially a selfish man.

The man who has a selfish attitude toward that which God has entrusted to his stewardship could never properly exercise the gift of giving, for every opportunity to exercise the gift would challenge his love for what he has. And so, the apostle, I believe, in writing concerning the exercise of the gift, says that a man, in order to have and exercise this gift, must be unselfish. Now, related to this, and the next point that I would observe, is that in order to exercise the gift, a man must recognize that all that he possesses belongs to God.

It is a trust given to him by God, or loaned to him by God. When God entrusts something to a man, God does not relinquish sovereign rights to it. It belongs to God.

God has deposited it in the hand of the individual. But it is erroneous to conclude that it belongs to the individual. It belongs to God, and the individual is to safeguard it and dispense it as God directs.

If I were to acquire a certain possession and put it in a safe deposit vault in the bank, that possession, because it's in the bank, does not become the property of the bank. It is still my possession, even though I have placed it there. And that which God gives to an individual is God's, and he is entrusted with it, and therefore responsible to God in the use of it.

He is answerable to God, not for 10% of it. He is answerable to God for 100% of it. I think that means before an individual has a right to spend any money for anything, he ought to have God's permission.

And that goes for paying the gas bill, the food bill, the clothing bill, the recreational bill, or whatever it is. Now, this is important because a man who views what he has as his own is never going to exercise a gift of giving. Then, in this connection, I read in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 17, "...charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." And what Paul taught Timothy there was that everything that Timothy had had come from God.

It was God's gift to him. God had given it to Timothy to use, but Timothy is responsible to use it so as to please the giver. He gives it to us richly to enjoy, but he recognized that it comes from God.

The individual is responsible to God in the exercise of this gift. Then, the next verse makes another observation concerning the gift of giving, and that an individual, in order to exercise this gift, must be willing to give. Now, this seems so obvious it scarcely would seem to need to be stated, and yet this is the key to the gift of giving, a willingness to give.

Paul says, "...charge those that are rich that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate or share." And Paul, four times over, emphasizes the same basic truth that one must be willing. He must do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Now, because many do not have this attitude toward material things, God never could give them that that would enable them to exercise the gift of giving.

God knows that if he gave something to a man, the man would be unwilling to part with any of it. He would be unwilling to share it, unwilling to communicate or distribute. And God has to say, in effect, If I gave it to that man, he would use it unwisely, he would use it selfishly.

He cannot be trusted with it. I cannot use him as a gift to exercise the gift of giving. And an unwillingness to give, did we have it to give, consigns many to poverty.

We can't be trusted with it. And so, Paul, in writing concerning the use of wealth, emphasizes there must be a willingness to give. Now, many might conclude that the gift of giving is one of the lesser gifts.

They would feel that one who had the gift of evangelist and one sold to Christ, or one who had the gift of pastor-teacher and built up the saints in the faith and shepherded the flock, is worthy of a reward. But one who simply handles his money wisely and meets the needs of the saints certainly couldn't expect to receive a reward for that kind of thing, other than the reward that comes from the joy of giving. But I want you to notice what Paul said in 1 Timothy 6, 19.

Those who exercise the gift of giving because of a love for the brethren, because of unselfishness, and because of a willingness to give, such ones lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life. Now, Paul certainly is not teaching that men can buy eternal life, but when God gives a man eternal life, he opens up before him the vast prospect of gaining a reward from his hands. The apostle could write to the Philippians and say, because he had kept the faith there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, would give him at that day, not him only, but unto all them that love his appearance.

He's writing to Timothy, not Philippians, isn't he? But do you notice that Paul says the individual who is trustworthy with the material things that God has given him can expect a reward no less than the one who exercises the gift of apostles. This shows me that in the sight of God, to minister out of the abundance of

that which God has given faithfully, unselfishly, motivated by love, God will give that man who exercises that gift a reward. I think of all the gifts, the one who exercises the gift of giving becomes a special target for subtle attacks.

If a man has the gift of evangelists or the gift of apostles or gift of pastor teacher, he's expected to minister the word, to teach faithfully, to preach the gospel, to shepherd the flock. The individual who has the gift of giving becomes a target for every selfish, greedy individual who, in order to fill his own coffers, will appeal to a man who may be known as an unselfish man who is able to give and willing to give. I know that there come across your desks constant appeals that are based not on biblical principles or because of biblical needs, but appeals based on a carnal basis.

An individual who has the gift of giving is responsible to keep himself from becoming a target to those who would misuse the gifts that he might be constrained to give. What I'm trying to say is that the exercise of the gift of giving puts an unusual responsibility upon the one who has that gift. For just to give may not exercise the gift of giving nor fulfill responsibility to God at all.

If he gives to the wrong thing, if he does not invest his money wisely, if he does not know where his money goes, if he does not check on the needs to which he is supposed to be giving, he could be misusing the gift. So this calls for special wisdom and special guidance from God lest the gift be misused. The person who has the gift of giving will be sensitive to the needs of the brethren.

But a need is not enough. There needs to be guidance from the Spirit of God to convince that man he is the one whom God would use to meet that need. He must exercise care, then, lest his ability to give and his willingness to give should divert from godly uses the funds that God has entrusted to him.

I close with this one observation. The gift of giving may involve more than just giving money. It can involve giving oneself.

It can involve giving of one's time. It may involve giving of one's abilities to meet the need of another. You may not have funds, but you may still exercise the gift of giving.

Therefore, I believe we should, before God, be concerned about what we in love, prompted by the Spirit of God, can do to meet any of the many, many needs that a brother in Christ may have. We're responsible to God, and without the exercise of the gift of giving, there will not be soundness in the bond. May God provide us with those who can give themselves, give what they have, so that the needs of the body might be met.

We pray, Our Father, that the Spirit of God may show to us ways in which we can exercise a gift of giving, that we might invest, whether it be money, whether it be time, whether it be ability, whatever it be, so that needs are met. Dismiss us from this hour with the riches of Thy grace and mercy and peace upon us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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