

# **The ABCs of Stewardship**

**Donation: The Reward of a Successful Steward**

*Luke 6:20-38*

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September 26, 2004

## Donation: The Reward of a Successful Steward

### Scripture

Today we come to the conclusion of a series of messages on *The ABCs of Stewardship*. For the past four weeks we have been talking about stewardship, and today I want to talk about “Donation: The Reward of a Successful Steward.” The material for this message comes from Dr. John Maxwell.

In Luke 6:20-38 our Lord gives us some tremendous teaching on the subject of giving.

Basically his teaching is this: *It is not our duration of life but our donation to life that counts!* And what he means is this: It’s not how many years we live that counts; it’s what we do with those years that really counts!

If you died right now, what donation would you have made to life? Would you say, “I don’t think I have really done much with my life”?

Or would you say, “I have given my life to extend God’s kingdom”?

Have you been a *contributor* or a *consumer*?

A *giver* or a *taker*?

I have known people who have come to the end of a long life, and their whole life has been a life of consumption rather than contribution. Every single day of their lives they have taken, and never learned to be a giver.

On the other hand, I know people who have died in their youth, and their whole life has been a life of contribution rather than consumption. They gave, they contributed, and they made a difference.

My thesis for today’s message is this: *Giving has nothing to do with assets. Giving has everything to do with attitude.*

In Luke 6:20-38 our Lord was not teaching about our bank accounts, our homes, or our cars. No. He was teaching that some of

the biggest givers in life often have very few assets, and some of the biggest takers in life often have very many assets.

Let's read Luke 6:20-38:

**<sup>20</sup> Looking at his disciples, he said:**

**“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.**

**<sup>21</sup> Blessed are you who hunger now,  
for you will be satisfied.**

**Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.**

**<sup>22</sup> Blessed are you when men hate you,  
when they exclude you and insult you  
and reject your name as evil,  
because of the Son of Man.**

**<sup>23</sup> “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.**

**<sup>24</sup> “But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have already received your comfort.**

**<sup>25</sup> Woe to you who are well fed now,  
for you will go hungry.**

**Woe to you who laugh now,  
for you will mourn and weep.**

**<sup>26</sup> Woe to you when all men speak well of you,  
for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.**

**<sup>27</sup> “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. <sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would have them do to you.**

**<sup>32</sup> “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that. <sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom**

**you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ lend to ‘sinners,’ expecting to be repaid in full. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.**

**<sup>37</sup> “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. <sup>38</sup> 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 to you.” (Luke 6:20-38)**

## **Introduction**

I would like you to notice verses 20-23. Isn't it interesting that in verse 20 there are those who have very little finances. In verse 21 they have very little food. And in verse 22 they have very few friends. And yet, our Lord says that they are blessed.

Now notice verses 24-26. Jesus goes from blessings to woes. Jesus talks about those who have finances (verse 24), food (verse 25), and friends (verse 26).

Now, I understand that people are not blessed simply because they have little finances, little food, and few friends. Jesus is talking about spiritual poverty, hunger and mourning. There is a spiritual component as well.

Nevertheless, Jesus is dropping a series of bombshells on his audience. Jesus says that some people are blessed when they have no finances, food and friends, while others face impending doom when they have finances, food and friends.

You say, “Wait a minute. Is Jesus anti-rich and pro-poor?” No. That has nothing to do with the passage.

Here's one way to understand what he is saying. Jesus is saying that if you are a giver in life, even though you may have very few assets, you will be blessed.

And conversely, if you are a taker in life, even though you may have many assets in this life, you face impending doom in the future.

I want you to notice a very important statement in verse 24: **“But woe to you who are rich, *for you have already received your comfort.*”**

Do you know what Jesus is saying? He is saying that you who are rich, you who are consumers, you who are takers in this life, should enjoy all that you have today because that is all the reward you will ever receive in this life. You are never going to enjoy more in the next life because you are enjoying it all in this life. You are not a giver in this life. You are a taker in this life.

There is a well-known saying that we so often forget. It says:

Only one life to live; it will soon be past.  
Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Friends, you and I have only one life. And when we get to the end of our lives, the only thing that’s going to count—as far as God is concerned—is whether we have lived for the King or not, whether we have been givers or takers, whether we have been contributors or consumers in life.

People say, “I would be a giver in life if I had something to give.” Those people don’t understand that giving has nothing to do with assets.

You may be a student, retired, a child, single, married, a parent, or a spouse. Whoever you are, you need to understand that giving has nothing to do with assets. Rather, it has everything to do with attitude. Saying that you would be a giver *if* you had something to give is just an excuse.

God has given you talents. God has given you time. God has given you treasure. God has blessed you with more than you will ever know. And if you doubt that, go to any third-world country.

You need to realize that the issue is not the size—or lack thereof—of your assets. The issue is your attitude. Are you going

to be a *giver* or are you going to be a *taker* in life? Are you going to be a *contributor* or are you going to be a *consumer* in life?

Look at verses 27ff. How many assets do you have to have to love your enemy? What size checking account do you need to love your enemy? How many assets do you have to have to do good to those who hate you? Or to bless those who curse you? Or to pray for those who mistreat you?

Our Lord understood that it has nothing to do with assets; it has everything to do with attitude.

I know people who have very few assets and are tremendous givers in life. You see, they choose to give and to be generous with what they have.

Because of the recent hurricanes that struck Florida, we are very aware of the incredible damage that such natural disasters can cause. Some years ago there was an earthquake in Anchorage, Alaska. There was a lot of damage amounting to millions of dollars. People wrote to the Governor expressing their concern for what they had lost, and they wondered if they were going to receive any aid to help them. So the Governor went on television to let the people know what would happen. He told the people that thousands had written to him and he had felt a great deal of stress and pressure and concern for the people.

And as he closed the telecast he said, "I received a card from a ten year-old boy that has lifted the load." He held up a 3 by 5 card that had two nickels that were scotch-taped to the card with this note: "Dear Governor: Use this wherever it is needed most. Signed, James. P.S. If you need more, let me know."

Two nickels? Millions of dollars? It's all a matter of attitude. It has nothing to do with the amount of our finances.

## Lesson

Now let's get to the meat of the passage. I want to give you three truths about givers as taught by Jesus.

## I. Givers Live on a Different Level (6:27-35)

First, givers live on a different level.

Look at what Jesus says in verses 27-35. What separates the giver and the taker?

*First, givers are positive activists in life.* Show me a giver, and I will show a person who is active in life. He is constantly giving.

Givers are always giving. Jesus describes a giver in relation to his enemies. He loves his enemy. He does good to him. He blesses him. He prays for him. He turns the other cheek. He gives.

You see, for Jesus, Christianity is not merely a bunch of *don'ts*. To be sure, the Christian forsakes his sin. But the Christian does more than leave his sin. He does something positive. He obeys his Lord. He serves his Lord. He makes a difference in life.

*Second, givers do more than is expected.* Look at verses 32ff. Our Lord is talking about an unnatural way of living. He is saying that Christians do more than is expected. And the world does not understand this kind of living.

*Third, givers do good expecting nothing in return.* Notice what Jesus says in verse 35: **“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.”** Jesus did not say that you would *have* nothing in return. He said that you should *expect* nothing in return.

What does Jesus say in the very next phrase? **“Then your reward will be great. . .”** (6:35b). Now doesn't that sound like a paradox? Jesus says, “Give, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great.”

But this, beloved, is the difference between the giver and the taker. The taker gives and expects something in return. It's not really giving, you see. It's trading. He gives, and then he waits for the return.

Now notice how Jesus describes the giver. Notice the word **credit** in the following verses:

Verse 32: “**If you love those who love you, what *credit* is that to you?**”

Verse 33: “**And if you do good to those who are good to you, what *credit* is that to you?**”

Verse 34: “**And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what *credit* is that to you?**”

What does Jesus mean when he keeps using the word **credit**? He means that takers give expecting something back in return, whereas givers give without expecting something back in return.

Last week I mentioned that there are three levels of living.

First, there is the *top level*. This is the best level. At the top level *God controls both my possessions and me*. God has ownership of both. At this level the person says, “God, you own everything. You own me. And you own all that I have. What are you going to do through me?” This person is a giver. He gives and gives, and never expects anything in return.

Second, the *middle level* is where *I control my possessions*. The person at this level says, “God, I own all that I have. I’ll give, but I expect something in return.” This person is a trader.

And third, there is the *bottom level*. At this level *my possessions control me*. The person at this level doesn’t give at all.

Givers live on a different level. They live on the top level.

## **II. Givers Understand the Principle of Sowing and Reaping (6:37-38)**

Second, givers understand the principle of sowing and reaping.

Underline the word **and** in verses 37-38 because that is key in understanding the passage: “**Do not judge, *and* you will not be judged. Do not condemn, *and* you will not be condemned. Forgive, *and* you will be forgiven. Give *and* it will be given to you.**”

The principle of sowing and reaping is not *I give you something and you give me something back in return*. That is not giving. That is trading.



The first principle of sowing and reaping is understanding that *God is the source*.

Who is your source? Back to the three levels of living.

If you hold on to everything that you have—the bottom level—you are saying, “I am the source.”

If you give to others and expect them to give back in return—the middle level—you are saying, “Others are the source.”

But if you give expecting nothing in return—the top level—you are saying, “God is the source.” And Jesus says that you will be rewarded, not by others, but by God himself. You understand that God will take care of you.

The second principle of sowing and reaping is *doing good without seeing and seeking the reward*.

Now, let’s backtrack for a moment. Notice in verses 32-34 the repeated phrase: **“What credit is that to you? . . . What credit is that to you? . . . What credit is that to you?”** And in verse 24 Jesus said that the rich **“have already received [their] comfort.”**

What is Jesus saying? Jesus is saying that if you have an expectation of receiving back, you do not understand that the principle of sowing and reaping is doing good without seeing and seeking the reward.

The principle of sowing and reaping is just doing good. And our Lord says that if you do good without expecting anything in return, you will be rewarded. It’s interesting to note that Jesus twice says that we will be rewarded (in verses 23 and 35). On both occasions he makes clear that the reward is not from people but from God himself.

In his book, *The Law of Rewards*, Randy Alcorn writes:

In 1990 I was a pastor on the board of a pregnancy resource center. After searching the Scriptures and praying, I began participating in nonviolent rescues at abortion clinics. I was arrested several times and went to jail for a couple of days. An abortion clinic subsequently won a court judgment against me and others. I told

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the judge that normally I would pay anything I owed, but I couldn't hand over money to people who would use it to kill babies.

Soon after, I discovered that my church was about to receive a writ of garnishment, demanding that they surrender one-fourth of my wages each month to the abortion clinic. The church would either have to pay the abortion clinic or defy a court order. To avoid this, I had to resign. The only way I could prevent garnishment in the future was to make no more than minimum wage.

Another court judgment followed, involving another abortion clinic. We were assessed the largest judgment ever against a group of peaceful protesters: \$8.4 million. By all appearances, our lives had taken a devastating turn—but it was one of the best things that ever happened to us.

What others intended for evil, God intended for good (Genesis 50:20). We began Eternal Perspective Ministries, which owns all the books I write. Nanci worked at a secretary's salary, supplementing my minimum wage. Then something interesting happened: suddenly my books were on the bestseller lists. Royalties increased. Our ministry has been able to give away 100 percent of those royalties to missions, famine relief, and pro-life work. In the past three years, by God's grace, the ministry has given away \$500,000. Sometimes I think God sells the books just to raise funds for ministries close to his heart! I don't go to bed at night feeling that I've "sacrificed" that money, wishing somehow I could get my hands on it. I go to bed feeling joy, because there's nothing like giving.<sup>1</sup>

Randy Alcorn learned that you give without expecting a return, and you will be rewarded. It may not come back soon and it may not come back in material reward. But your giving will be rewarded—either in this life or the next.

### **III. Givers Are Blessed by God (6:38)**

And third, givers are blessed by God.

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Alcorn, *The Law of Rewards* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale Publishing House, 2003), 8-9.

Look at what Jesus says in verse 38: **“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 to you.”**

Givers are blessed by God. They don't give in order to receive a blessing. They simply give because they delight in giving to God. But God blesses them in return—sometimes in this life, but always in the next.

Years ago when Lauren, my daughter, was about six years old, she wanted a pet. At first she wanted a rabbit, but thankfully she changed her mind and decided that she wanted a bird.

And so she started saving and praying that God would provide her with a bird. There was a new energy in Lauren as she worked, talked, and dreamed about having a pet bird. We knew that it would take Lauren years to save the money for a bird, and so we were quite happy to let her save for a bird.

After many weeks she had saved \$7.00. She knew that she was still a long way from her goal. But just at that time she felt a desire to give \$1.00—which took her several weeks to save—to Luke Brown, a missionary our church supported, who was teaching English in grim conditions in Uzbekistan. That was a big sacrifice, but not for Lauren. She really wanted to send Luke money so that he could tell people about Jesus. That was more important to her than saving for her bird. And so she sent him \$1.00.

Interestingly, many months later, when Luke was back in State College, he told us that the \$1.00 arrived on a day when he was really discouraged, and the Lord used that \$1.00 as a tremendous encouragement to him.

But, even more interestingly, within a week after Lauren sent the money to Luke, a lady in our church named Sue Jackson met another lady who wanted to give away not one but two birds! And so, a few days later Lauren had a cockatiel, a lovebird, two cages, and bird food—about a \$325.00 value—*given* to her!

Now, Lauren learned some valuable lessons. First, she learned that God is extremely generous. Her view of God is that he is a God of generosity and not of stinginess.

And second, she learned that givers are blessed by God. She never gave money to Luke expecting a return. She was too young to know about “trading.” But God blessed her because she was a giver.

## Conclusion

Today, God is calling every one of us to be givers. We are not to be takers and consumers in life, but we are to be givers and contributors in life.

Make a commitment today to live as a giver. Here are some steps to help you live as a giver.

*First, recognize that God owns all things.* This is our Father’s world. He owns all things. Everything belongs to him. And all of your gifts and talents and abilities are given to you by him.

*Second, understand that you are simply a steward.* God has entrusted talents, treasures and time to you so that you can manage them on his behalf. And you either manage it well or you manage it poorly. One day you will have to give an account of your stewardship to God.

*And third, determine today that you will be a giver.* Give God his due. Give him all that he wants from you. Give him your time, your treasures, and your talent. Allow God to use you for his glory.

Don’t rob from God. Give God your best, not your leftovers.

Paul Harvey shared this story on November 22, 1995. The Butterball Turkey Company set up a hotline to answer consumer questions about preparing holiday turkeys. One woman called to inquire about cooking a turkey that had been in her freezer for twenty-three years! The operator told her it might be safe if the freezer had been kept below zero degrees the entire time. But the operator warned the woman that, even if it was safe, the flavor had probably deteriorated, and she wouldn’t recommend eating it.

The caller replied, “That’s what we thought. We’ll just give it to the church.”

Friends, give God your best, not your leftovers. God considers that robbing him.

In the Old Testament God’s people were robbing from God. When God told them that they were robbing from him, they were amazed. “How do we rob you?” they asked (in Malachi 3:8).

“In tithes and offerings,” God said. “You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me.” The people were not giving God what rightfully belonged to him. They were holding back what belonged to God.

And then God made an amazing promise. He said, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10).

Whether or not the tithe is still in effect today is a topic for another day. But let me say this. Even if the tithe is not in effect today, the principle of sacrificial giving (which probably is not less than a tithe) is still in effect today. So, either way you slice it, God calls you to be a sacrificial giver.

Some of you say, “I am a student, and so I can’t give because I do not have much money.”

Or, “I am retired, and I have very little income, and so I can’t give because I don’t have much money.”

Or, “I am under a pile of debt, and so I can’t give because I don’t have much money.”

Or, “I do have a reasonable income, but I have to save for retirement, and so I can’t give.”

Listen! Whether you have little or much, what you have is from God. Determine today that you will be a giver. Give sacrificially. Give God his due. Sit down today and plan a budget—and give God his due. Don’t rob from God.

I’d like to help you give God his due. If you consider the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church your church family, the place you

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believe that God wants you to invest in, then pull out the card from your bulletin.

Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church's annual operating budget from Tithes and Offerings for this past year was approximately \$450,000. Presently we have roughly 75 active, resident family units who have at least one communicant member in our church family. The median annual household income in our community for 2003 was \$68,361. (The average annual household income for our community for 2003 was even higher—\$83,092.) Ten percent of the median household income is \$6,836. Multiply \$6,836 by 75 family units, and our church's annual income should be \$512,700. That is more than enough to finance the mission of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church. Instead of receiving \$512,700 this past year we received approximately \$355,000. That is giving at less than 7% on average per family.

### *Personal Worksheet*

**New Tampa Median Annual Household Income: \$68,361**

<u>% to TBPC</u>	<u>Annual Contribution</u>	<u>Weekly Contribution</u>
3%	\$2,050	\$39
5%	\$3,418	\$66
7%	\$4,785	\$92
10%	\$6,836	\$131
12%	\$8,203	\$158

**Personal Annual Household Income: \$\_\_\_\_\_**

<u>% to TBPC</u>	<u>Annual Contribution</u>	<u>Weekly Contribution</u>
3%	\$_____	\$_____
5%	\$_____	\$_____
7%	\$_____	\$_____
10%	\$_____	\$_____
12%	\$_____	\$_____

Let me encourage you to evaluate your present giving to the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church. Make a note of your Personal Annual Household Income. Then, calculate the percentage of your Annual Contribution to the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church. Divide that by 52 for your Weekly Contribution to the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church. Using this Personal Worksheet will help you calculate your present level of giving, as well as help you estimate a potential higher level of giving.

When you do that, you will discover that you will be blessed by God. May God help every one of you to be successful stewards of God's gifts. Amen.





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