

07. The Motivation Gift of Giving

Spiritual Gifts—God's Way

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Bible Text: Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12

Preached on: Sunday, April 3, 2011

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All right. Take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 12 as we continue our study in the spiritual gifts. And if you will look back at verse six is where we have been starting the study.

It says in verse six:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.¹

And those are our seven motivation gifts. And we were looking at that gift today, the gift of giving and there is also a special verse for them in verse 13.

It says, “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”²

So let's talk about this motivational gift of giving and, first of all, this gift is illustrated best in the life of Matthew. Matthew was a giver and he is very good about recording some details about giving that the other gospels don't get. In fact, it is Matthew's continual references to giving that all of the other gospels put together. So Matthew noticed stuff about this.

And I am, you know, I have often said that one of the best ways of determining what your spiritual gift is, is what do other Christians do that irritates you? And the major irritation for the person with the gift of giving is that other Christians are not trusting God for their finances. In other words, it is kind of like, you know, a person with the gift of giving if they hear someone isn't tithing or giving because they don't feel like they can afford it, that irritates them. It is like why can't you trust God, you know, to... why can't you give to him first and then trust him for the remainder?

¹ Romans 12:6-8.

² Romans 12:13.

So let's just do a quick overview. Matthew is the person that best illustrates this and in Romans 12:13, as I just read a few minutes ago, the two guidelines that are given to the people with the gift of giving is that, first of all, they need to give to the needs of other Christians. And, secondly, they need to practice hospitality. And probably the most important principle that we can remember for someone who has the gift of giving is they need to remember that God owns everything.

There is a tendency... People with the gift of giving tend to be very... they tend to be very personally frugal. They don't spend a lot of money on themselves. They tend to try to be very good stewards. They are afraid to go overboard in any one area.

Well, you know, one of the problems that you can have is that you can sometimes lose focus and think that it is your money that you are getting. And we need to understand that none of the money that we have is our money. It is all God's money if you look at things scripturally. Everything we have is owned by God.

You know, in Deuteronomy eight the Bible says, "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth."³

You know, you don't have the ability to get up and go to your job and do it, were it not for the Lord's grace. And so there is some weeks I need more grace than others and this week is going to be one of those weeks for me. I have got international travel and I have to go through customs. I have to apply for a work permit, you know, spend an hour and a half with an immigration official tomorrow to get a work permit to get in and out of Canada more frequently. And it is just going to be kind of hassle. So I kind of have to have God's grace for those things. But, you know, I couldn't earn my living were it not for the grace of God.

You can't get up in the morning and fog up a mirror with your breath were it not for the grace of God. So we need to get in our head the idea that the grace of God is what enables us to do everything.

So let's look at the... we have used these kind of cartoon illustrations with each gift and let's look at what happens if you were at a dinner party and the person with the gift of giving is there and somebody drops and spills dessert on the floor. The first... the person with the gift of giving is likely to say, "You know, I will be happy to buy a new dessert," you know? Because their motivation is to give to a tangible need. They see a need there and they see somebody embarrassed. They want to relieve the embarrassment and they say, "You know what? Dinner shouldn't end without dessert. Let's just... let me go buy a new one real quick."

If this giver came to visit you in the hospital he might be the person that would ask you, "Do you have insurance to cover this kind of thing?" Because they are concerned about your finances. They are concerned about the practical financial need that has arisen and

³ Deuteronomy 8:18.

who, by the way, understands that medical care today is very expensive, ok? So it is a daunting thing and a frightening thing for many people.

You know, we have been looking about at these seven sense perceptors. There are seven different kinds of sense perceptors in your body and each of those different kinds of sense perceptors does something different. Well, giving is analogous to that sense perceptor that senses cold. When you get near something, now, we remember prophecy sensed something hot. You know, when you get near heat, you know that you are about to get burned. And a prophet is the one that says, "If this nation doesn't repent, we are about to suffer God's judgment."

And, by the way, prophets have a lot to talk about right now in my opinion. But a person with ... when they are using their sense of cold they know when they are near something cold.

How many of you can think of back to the last time you walked through a grocery store and you went through that frozen food section? Not the kind where they have the doors that open, but, you know, when they used to have these just chests out where you just reach in and grab it and you pass by and you feel that cold air, don't you?

Now an interesting thing is that cold air has a higher pressure so the cold air comes toward you, but as it comes toward you, you feel the heat leaving. So really what is happening is when you are near cold, what you feel is the heat leaving your body. And that is why you feel cold.

And I don't know that you have ever noticed that a child when they have a fever, you know, you stick a thermometer in their mouth or hopefully not somewhere else, but sometimes we have to do that. But anyway, you stick a thermometer in your child and it comes up and says they have got a 103 fever. Well, that is bad.

And yet what will the child be complaining of? You would think with 103 internal temperature they would say, "Oh, man, I am burning up." But what do they usually tell you? I am cold. And they are shivering. Now they have a fever, but they are shivering.

Why is that? Because their cold perceptors sense that heat is leaving their body and it is. It is degrading. It is heading out as fast as it can and, you know, that want to cover up and that may be the worst thing for them depending on how high their temperature is.

So a person with a gift of giving, when they are near someone who has need, when they are near someone who is cold and hungry and naked as Scripture puts it, they have that desire to give warmly to that person and so when they are around people that need, they know it.

So this is that sense perceptor number that when an object is near the skin, it is colder than the skin. It draws warmth away from and that is detected by cold perceptors.

All right. Let's look at some characteristics of the giver. So if the person has the gift of giving, what kind of characteristics should be present?

Well, first of all, the giver is able to see resources. They are able to look at things and know that that is, maybe, a wise investment or that is a good place to be a good steward of the Lord's money. And they want to use, not just their money, but all their assets, their time, their money, their possessions. They want to use those to some way advance the work of the Lord.

The fact is, let me tell you a little secret. This isn't in any of my slides, but I call giving the chameleon gift. Now let me tell you what I mean by that. When a person has the gift of teaching it is usually fairly plainly obvious. They like to structure everything. They like to make bullet points. They like to do PowerPoint slides. They like to have things in order, sequential order. When a person has the gift of prophecy that tends to be fairly obvious, too, because, you know, they are always seeing hypocrisy wherever it exist and pointing it out and being irritated by it. When somebody has the gift of serving it is just kind of all over them because every time there is an opportunity to do something they do it and they do it joyfully because that is how God has wired them. They like having opportunities to serve the Lord.

And, you know, and a person has the gift of administration, they have an unusual ability to organize and move tasks around in ways that the rest of us can't. But when a person has the gift of giving it is not always apparent that they have the gift. The reason why is that giving can imitate all of the other gifts.

A person who has the gift of giving maybe they aren't wired to be a servant. They don't have the gift of service, but they see an opportunity to give of their time or give of their energy and so they go give of that and it looks to everybody else like they have the gift of service when, in reality, they are practicing their gift of giving.

Similarly, if a giver knows a spiritual truth that they have gotten in their hearts or maybe it has been taught to them and been beneficial to them and they see someone else whose lives can be blessed by that truth, they may end up teaching that truth to somebody else and somebody may look at them and say, "Oh, I think they are a teacher," when, in reality, they have the gift of giving.

And so a lot of these things, you know, it may be that a person that has the gift of mercy has a very soft and tender heart toward people and a lot of people will look at the person with the gift of giving and see them meeting practical needs and says, "Oh, I think that person has the gift of mercy."

So if you ever meet somebody and you can't figure out what their spiritual gift is because it looks like they are doing three or four, they are either a very mature Christian, because we are commanded to practice all the gifts in Scripture, or there is somebody with a gift of giving and it just manifests in a lot of different ways.

But the giver has the ability to see resources that even if they have limited funds, they are able to know how to draw upon resources beyond themselves when there is need.

Let's look at the next characteristic. The giver invests himself with the gift.

Paul made the comment about the Christians in Philippi that they first gave their own selves to the Lord and then unto us by the will of God.

So, in other words, it is kind of like a giver. They throw themselves into it first and then they throw their money and assets in later. I remember that when I was in high school and running track for a brief period of time until I figured out that being a professional athlete was not God's calling in my life. But I remember running track and the coach looked at me for a while. He says, "You know, the only chance you have got is running the hurdles." He said, "You are built for the hurdles. So we are going to let you run hurdles."

And, you know the problem with hurdles is you have to jump over them while you are running. And, but anyway, the coach always said, "You know, throw your heart over and then the rest of your body will follow."

You know, you have to... when you are coming up to it, you have to kind of visualize yourself going over and before the rest of your body would go up and go over the hurdles.

And so with givers, they kind of throw their heart into the situation and then whatever else they have kind of flows along after that.

But a giver needs the reassurance that his giving is in the will of God. They need to know that what they are giving to is appropriate, what they are giving to is in the will of God. So they give themselves first to the Lord and then they give their gift.

Here is another characteristic. The giver desires to give high quality. So they want to give quality gifts. They want them to last. In other words, yeah, I remember one time many years ago I went to buy tires. We have a Buick LeSabre and I have had two Buick LeSabres and my experience with those taught to never buy another one, but hopefully if you have got a Buick it is working great for you.

But anyway I had a Buick LeSabre and one day it needed tires and I was kind of a poor seminary student and heard that there was a Kelly Springfield tire barn that you could go up to and buy tires and they were called blem, but I was assured this meant that they just had minor blemishes on them and you could get them at a great discount.

So I went up and I bought four brand new steel belted radial Kelly Springfield tires and put on my car and that was a good price, a price I could afford and they looked perfect to me.

Well, within a month all four of those tires had had flats. Well, since that time I have never ever bought another Kelly Springfield tire. Now I will tell you, though, that I have bought a lot of other tires that are of very good name brands, you know, and so I think I have Yokohama is the tire I get now which is really just a Michelin with a different name on it. But, you know, I put those tires on my car and they will go 60, 70, 80, 90,000 miles and still look good.

And so I have discovered it pays a little more to get quality up front than to get the cheapest thing because then things last longer.

Well, a person with the gift of giving is sensitive to these kinds of things. They don't want to just give the cheapest thing or the most expedient thing. They want it to be something of quality.

So, in other words, they don't want to just, you know, give you... maybe you have an appliance that is broken in your house. They don't want to just give you the latest yum, dumb Fuji dishwasher. They want to find one that is a quality thing that is going to last you for years to come.

And so they want to give high quality gifts.

Now Matthew recorded in his gospel more detail about the gifts given than any other gospel writers. So, for example, he is the only one that refers to the treasures that were brought by the magi. That is where we get that whole gold and frankincense and myrrh thing because he basically took inventory of the gifts that they brought. He is the only one that describes Mary's ointment as very precious and refers to the fat that the tomb that Joseph of Arimathaea gave for Christ's body to be put in was a new tomb, not just a tomb, but a brand new one, one that no body had ever been in, that had never seen corruption. So they desire to give high quality.

Another characteristic is that the giver hopes that his gift or her gift will answer a prayer. That is nothing that excites a giver more than knowing that when they give something it answers a prayer.

So when a giver is in fellowship with the Lord very often they hear God's promptings. You know, God gave them that gift for a reason. God provides them resources and he prompts them to give and sometimes they are prompted to give even when the need isn't obvious. I mean, it is easy to see when you see somebody over here and they are about to get kicked out of their house because they can't pay the rent and the utilities have been turned off for two months and their car is, you know, six months out of inspection and the registration sticker is not current to say, "Oh, I think they have a need."

But sometimes God will prompt a giver to see a gift that isn't really even obvious to the rest of us. And when they give that gift and later learn that it met a need in their life, it was an answer to prayer, it really blesses them to hear that.

It was kind of interesting. Last year I prayed and had a goal for our missions giving and we got down to December first of last year, 2010. And I thought, “We are not going to meet our goal,” because we would give on a percentage basis to things. And I thought, you know, “We need another 7000 dollars to come in this month in order to meet our missions goal.” And based on the... what the regular offerings and the expenses were, I just thought to myself, “Well, there is no way.”

And then like the last week in December we had 14,000 dollars in offerings and there were two very large offerings and I tried to share with people, you know, that, hey, you know, that offering that Sunday was a direct response to prayer because I asked God to let us go ahead and meet that missions goal and we did and we basically doubled our missions giving from the previous giving at 2009 to 2010. And that is awesome.

And so, you know, when you can share with somebody, you know what? I appreciate, you know, you giving me to me. You know, I don't know if you even know this, but that meet a very specific need in our lives.

I can't tell you the times at the first church I pastored—and I pastored there twice—first time was God trying to, I guess, get the dross out of my life and the second time was just a flat mistake. It was just, you know, I think sometimes first churches eat pastors alive and they are a wonder if they live through it.

But I remember that I was having a really... we were having a really hard time financially, you know. We had a place that we had rented and basically the church paid me 700 dollars a month. They considered that a full time salary even though most of the families spent more than that every time they went to Sam's wholesale club, but at check out, you know. And so it was tough. And especially in the winter because in the winter we had to fill up this big propane tank outside and somebody would come by every month and fill up the tank and it would be like 229 dollars and it is real hard to fill up a 229 dollar propane tank and take care of your car and buy diapers for your baby when you are making 700 dollars a month. That was bad times in a lot of ways.

And that... about once or twice a month this 90 year old man, Mr. Travis, brother Travis Green, would come out. I am sure he is long since been with the Lord by now because he would be 111 if he wasn't. But Travis Green had come out. He and his wife still attended church in their 90s. He, as far as I know the only job he ever had is he is out in this little community which is, you know, Antioch was way out, it was 23 miles from the nearest Kroger's store. Ok, that tells you the road only went out to this community twice a week. That is how remote it was.

And but Travis Green had a little grocery store on the backside of his house and he had been a grocer for a lot of years, always been frugal, I guess, always lived within his means. And about twice a month he would come out and he would... this little 90 year old man, he only stood about this high. He would shake my hand and there would be one or

two 100 dollar bills in it. And a lot of times that 100 dollar bill or those two hundred dollar bills was the difference between us eating or not that month.

You know, he was such a blessing. And I know... and in fact, it was really hard for me to take the money. Men don't like to be on the receiving end of giving and one day God said, "He gets more blessing out of giving it than you do in getting it."

And I finally realized that, you know, giving was the real blessing. He was getting eternal rewards in heaven, but, you know, it was just, you know, I told him many times. I said, "You don't know what this means to me." And it was just such a blessing.

Here is another characteristic of the giver and that is they desire to give secretly. They don't really want people to know.

Now a real giver doesn't make a point of telling you what he gave or say, "Hey, look I gave this for you." A real giver likes to give secretly. They look to the Lord for provision but they want the recipient to do the same. So, in other words, if I knew you had a need and about once a month I came and gave you a couple of hundred dollars and slipped it, you know, slipped it in an envelope through the window of your car and you went out and got in. What is this? You would open it and, you know, and it was signed, "Brother Robert." Then after a while you might expect brother Robert to meet all your financial needs.

Well, if I have the gift of giving or if I am practicing that gift even though it is not my gift to practice it biblically, I want to give to you in such a way that you don't know it was me, but you say, "Lord, thank you. This was from you. This was from on high."

And then the Lord gets all the glory, because what I should want as either a person with a gift of giving or a person who is trying to practice that gift, I should want to give the gift in such a way that the Lord gets the glory and I get none of the credit. Now that is really the way to give and I think that is a biblical way to give. It is that whole idea of let the right hand, you know, don't let the right hand know what the left hand is doing.

So the giver understands that future reward is more important than present praise. And so they would rather get their reward from the Lord than to get the praise from man.

And, by the way, Matthew is the only one of the gospel writers that emphasizes this. He talks over and over again about, hey, when you pray go into your closet in secret and what you do there, the Lord will reward you for openly. And when you give, don't give so that people can see you, but give secretly and what you do in secret the Lord rewards openly. You know, he makes a point of recording that teaching of Jesus because that rang a bell with him. That resonated with him.

Now in Matthew chapter six, verses one through four, let's read these verses together.

It says:

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men [that is giving to the poor is what alms is], to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”⁴

And, by the way, this is scary. It says if you do it in a way that everybody knows what you gave, you don't have any heavenly reward. All you have got is an earthly reward. Which one, by the way, would you rather have?

Now if that question is tough for you, let me ask you this question. Which one do you think lasts longer? You know, heavenly reward makes a lot better sense, doesn't it?

He says, “Give it away.” He says:

“...otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.”⁵

So a lot of times there were people that are on their way to the temple and maybe they are bringing their tithe and if they were wealthy they got it and often they would get it in coins and the smaller the coin the better. And then they would come carrying these great chests of coins and they would dump it in the offering box and you hear it, you know, making all this racket. You know, we have got an offering box back there on the back table now. Inside that offering box there is a velvet sack to try to cushion the noise, but they didn't have those back then and so you dropped it in and it... you know, make all this loud noise. And the louder and the longer the noise the more notice they got from everybody.

Sometimes they would even kind of, you know, have somebody blow a shofar or something as a, quote, spiritual thing, but it was really so everybody could notice, “Oh, look. Here he comes. Let's see what Mr. Money Bags gives today, you know?”

They had their reward, but it wasn't from God. They had the reward of men.

And then he says:

“Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.”⁶

In other words, keep it so secret you barely know you are doing it yourself.

“That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”⁷

⁴ Matthew 6:1.

⁵ Matthew 6:1-2.

⁶ Matthew 6:2-3.

⁷ Mathew 6:4.

If you are going to really practice the gift of giving, you need to do it in such a way that God is the only one that knows about it. It is really nobody else's business.

And you want people not to thank you. I mean, you know, if you give a gift and you expect to be thanked that is not really the gift of giving. You want people to give praise to the Lord. If you really have the gift of giving, that is the way you practice that gift.

And, by the way, just so you will know, one of the things I do is that if somebody gives a designated gift and very frequently, just about every month, I have two or three gifts that are given to the church and it is designated on the memo line, "This is for such and such," or "This is for so and so."

Now if it is one of those, "This is for so and so," gifts, it is a benevolence gift it is, I send that person a check from the church and I just put "anonymous gift" on the check. I never say who it is. If you want to tell them, that is your business, but I don't reveal the identity of a donor to anybody, because I assume that you want to practice that spiritual gift of giving and not let somebody know.

So here is another characteristic and that is a giver is concerned that his gift may corrupt.

See, a mature giver understands that one thing money can do is if you give it in the wrong way or the wrong quantities or the wrong time or something, it may actually cause a corruption of that person by the gift. And so you need... the giver is well aware that it took them discipline to get these resources, that they need to be good stewards of the resources and maybe the person they are giving to hasn't learned that. Maybe the reason they are having financial problems that you want to give to them, is because they haven't practiced proper financial disciplines.

And so you look for ways to give that don't encourage dependency on someone else and to point them to the Lord. You don't want to give them something that encourages their slothfulness so that basically they just, you know, want to say, "Ok, well, good. Now I have got people giving to me, I don't have to work anymore I don't have to earn anymore."

Givers don't want to give that kind of gift. They want to relieve the need, but they want to make sure the person is still industrious. And they try not to give something that is overly extravagant.

All right and another characteristic is that the giver exercises personal thriftiness. In other words, with themselves, they tend not to be extravagant even if they have great resources. They tend to be, you know, very frugal with it. And maybe the reason they have so many resources to give is because they are personally frugal. They don't spend it all every time.

Some of the greatest givers I have known look like simple unassuming east Texas farmers. And they drive old cars and they have lived in the same house for 50 to 60 years

and they don't have anything fancy and they don't dress fancy, but they are willing and able to give when there is need.

And a giver, by the way, is also concerned about getting the best buy. Now I like getting a good deal on stuff. You know, most of the time I give, getting on a good deal is spending 30 seconds with, you know, Google search engines and Amazon dot com to find the best deal and get it. But you don't always get the best deal like that. A giver will go out and they will find bargains you never knew existed. They will go out and they will talk to somebody and they will work out a deal and you hear what they got later and it is like half the price of Walmart and you think, "How in the world did they do that?"

And it is because they know how to get the best deals. They want to make sure that their money goes as far for the kingdom of God as possible. And a giver will go to extra effort to save money and be resourceful with what they have.

Another characteristic to the gift of giving is that a giver will use their gifts to multiply giving. I don't know how many of you have ever heard of this idea, but very often someone will say, "I tell you what I will do. If you will go and raise money of this cause, for every dollar that other people give, I will match that or I will match it at 50 cents on the dollar," or something like that.

When you hear organizations doing that or people doing that, what they are trying to do is motivate other people to give. And that is a great way to motivate. It is kind of like, you know, if you need a new van for the church or you need something else that is kind of... you are maybe raising money for a building program so that you build a new auditorium and somebody says, "You know what? For every dollar that is given between April first and April 30th of this year I will give... I will match that gift with 50 cents."

Well, then that motivates other people to give because they now know that their gift is going to be immediately multiplied. Their gift is immediately going to go further. So they like to use gifts to multiply giving.

Another characteristic is that the giver confirms the amount with counsel. And one thing givers don't like is pressure appeals. You all have been under this under those. It might have been that door to door salesman. You know, he comes by your house and he doesn't take no for an answer and he keeps saying, "Well, you know, what if I could do this for you." And if you say no to that plan, he says, "Well, what if I could reduce the payments to this," you know? And he keeps going until finally you are ready to buy the thing just to get him out of your house, you know? Or you go to a car dealer. Maybe you have had pressures sales at a car dealer.

Well, guess what? In the name of God sometimes pastors and churches can make those pressure appeals, too. You know, they want you to... they give you a six week lead up campaign and then you sign commitment cards and then somebody writes you letters to remind you of your commitment and I am not saying that that is necessarily evil. I personally kind of have a discomfort level with that kind of thing. I think what you need

to do is give people an excitement for the vision of what God wants to do and then just pray. I believe our resources come from the Lord, not from people. And I believe if you pray, God will provide the resources through the people as he moves on their heart.

But givers don't like it when there is a little bit of a pressure appeal. So what they would rather do is go look for needs somewhere else that have been overlooked. And instead of the main thing, you know, the building program, they are going to look and see if something else is being overlooked. And they will often want to confirm that that is the right thing. So if there is a husband and wife and they both, you know, one of them has the gift of giving and one will usually talk to the other and say, "I have been thinking about this. I have been praying about this. You know, is this something you think would be, you know, appropriate?"

And, by the way, I have got a confession to make. I will just go ahead and confess this publicly. I have no clue after 30 years of marriage what my wife's spiritual gift is. Now I am sad to tell you that. But I thought for a lot of years it was mercy because my wife is standing in the grocery store line of 10 minutes the person in front of her in the grocery store line has told her their entire life story.

And she comes out telling me about the person and the three prayer requests the person gave her while standing in the grocery store line. It is something about Judy that just attracts people like that and she is very listening to that.

So for a long time I thought she had the gift of mercy. But I am wondering if she doesn't have this chameleon gift of giving, because if I had a million dollars, I am pretty sure she could spend it giving it to other people. And my wife will not let it... just ask any of my kids. She can't let national dill pickle day pass without some special gift at the breakfast table, you know, commemorating that day.

You know, if it is resurrection Sunday, if it is Valentine's day, the children will come in and find a breakfast prepared and something by each plate. She just loves to give.

She absolutely loves to do it and she has that ability to be frugal. So I don't know, I am still trying to figure out after 30 years. I am sure all of you husbands understand your wives, but I am still working on it.

But it is a wonderful thing when Judy and I both feel led of the Lord in the same way and very often at the same amount when it comes to giving. That is the way it ought to be.

Let's talk about some misuses of the gift of giving because misuses are probably, if you don't know that you have the gift of giving, you are probably misusing it and this might be a more accurate way to tell.

So the first misuse is that givers can hoard resources for themselves. So, in other words, they can allow these things to just kind of hoard for themselves. And to be an effective giver you need to have a fear of the Lord and you need to trust the Lord with your

resources and so it is important for givers to give on a regular basis, because otherwise they are going to be so frugal and so economic and they are so good with the stuff that God entrusts to their life that sometimes they just kind of build up a big reserve and they may be even telling themselves, well, I am waiting for the next big opportunity to give.

And this will sound weird, but it is possible for a giver to be so frugal with their money waiting for the next special opportunity that they forget to tithe on a regular basis. They forget to give to the church on a regular basis, because guess what? The electric bills still come every month.

By the way, if there is any givers here, I am happy to tell you that since we insulated the church our electric bill came down 200 dollars this month over the same time last year. So that is a good thing. It is 200 dollars towards the missions instead of the electric company. I am happy about that.

But, you know, we need to give regularly. Tithe. The purpose of the tithe, by the way, is to teach the fear of the Lord. That is the real purpose. It is not so that we can have some legalistic requirements that you have got to give 10 percent. It was to teach the fear of the Lord.

So if the giver stops giving they lose that sense of the fear of the Lord and they become stagnant in their faith.

Now here is another characteristic. Well, let's read Deuteronomy 14 together, because I want you to see this original purpose of tithing.

And a lot of Christians today, by the way, saying tithing is the law. Now let me tell you personally, I think that is just wrong. Ok? Let me tell you why. The law came through the ministry of Moses. God gave him the law and we read the five books of Moses and you get the law. But did you know that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek long before Moses was even a glint in his father's eye, ok?

So think about that. The tithe was established before the law so it is still in effect. And Jesus told the Pharisees, he says, "You do tithe of mint and anise and cumin," and he says, "But you have ignored the weightier matters of the law, of justice and judgment and mercy and equity." And then Jesus says this. He says, "These ought ye to have done," in other words, he says you ought to tithe, "and not to leave the other undone."⁸

So Jesus actually commended the tithe while telling the other thing.

Paul talked about on the first day of the week putting aside in proportion, that is proportional giving, a percentage giving as to had God had given him. And so I don't see anything in there. I think and when Malachi three says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a

⁸ Matthew 23:23.

blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it,”⁹ I think that is still valid in Scripture.

But look at the purpose, initially. He says, “Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.”¹⁰

By the way, it is the increase. So if you are in a business and you buy, you know, parts that cost you 50 dollars and you assemble something and you sell it for 100 dollars. You don’t tithe on the 100. You tithe on the 50 dollars profit, because it is the increase, not the total amount.

He says:

“...that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks...”¹¹

Now here is the big deal. He said, “...that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.”¹²

I have discovered that when people don’t give regularly and they don’t give generously, they tend not to have a fear of the Lord in other areas of their life.

Let me ask you a question. How many of you men would be less likely to lust after a person, less likely to look at a television program that you knew was evil if you knew that God was sitting in the room watching you, ok?

If you had a greater fear of the Lord you wouldn’t do that. One of the greatest ways to keep from sinning is to give generously, ok?

Ok, here is another misuse and that is that giver’s can use their gift to control people. A giver has the desire to make sure his gifts are wisely used, invested and used. So they will often buy a quality item and, Donald, you will have to hit the space bar again, because this animated for some reason. And so they will often buy a good quality item rather than giving the money to purchase the item. They would rather go get the gift themselves and make sure it is good quality and they want to take the choice out of it, maybe, for someone else. Or he may sponsor a specific project rather than an entire ministry. Maybe they don’t want to give to the whole ministry. They want to give to one little thing because that is what they want to do.

⁹ Malachi 3:10.

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 14:23.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 14:22-23.

¹² Deuteronomy 14:23.

So there is this tendency that sometimes people will look at this very focused, very specific, very controlled giving and say, “Well, you know, I think you are trying to control the ministry. They are trying to control the person.”

Another characteristic of givers is that they may force higher living standards. So if a giver focuses on the quality of his gift rather than the need he is meeting, it can cause the person who is giving the gift to be dissatisfied with other things that they own. It is kind of like, oh, well, for example, if you had kind of an old beater that you are driving, but it is still getting from point A to point B and for some reason I feel motivated to give you, you know, my new Lincoln Towncar that I have only been driving for three months—I don’t have one, by the way. That was an illustration. Ok. But if I had a new Lincoln Towncar I have been only driving for three months and gave that to you, it might be the best use of the resources to sell the new car and get the money and pay off other debts and still drive the old beater for a while. I know I remember several times that people have given Mr. Gotherd cars in the past. Mr. Gotherd still drives an old 60 something... do you remember what it is, Melody? It is an old car. It is an antique now. But he got it when it was probably... it was barely used and he has kept it in... been driving the same car for 40 years because to him it still goes from point A to point B so why get something else?

And so if somebody else gives him another car he just sells it and keeps driving his old one, you know, because that is better ideal.

So a giver can excuse another thing they can do is a giver can excuse personal luxuries based on the fact that they are generous. It is kind of like, well, you know, I am giving good quality gifts and so I deserve to have a little luxury, too.

But the thing is God says if you are not faithful in little, he won’t entrust you with much.

We need to be faithful in every little area of our life.

Here is another misuse of the gift of giving and that is a person with the gift of giving can feel guilty about their personal assets. So if a person is not in fellowship with the Lord as they start storing up any personal funds, they may think that is evil. And that is kind of a weird thing. In other words, they may have a 401K plan and feel bad when that is building up or maybe lately they have heard all the bad news about the economy and so they are getting out of their cash and they are buying silver and they are putting these silver coins in their safe getting ready for the future and they suddenly feel guilty that they have got physical money sitting in their safe.

Well, no, that just happens to be wise and prudent in today’s economy. It doesn’t mean it is evil. It is amazing to me how many people don’t understand what real evil is. Money is not evil. Let me say that again. Money is not evil. And if you think your money is evil, just write a check to the church and we will take care of it for you.

But money is not evil. It is the love of money.

Now, interesting enough, one popular financial writer I was listening to his book the other day, Robert Kiyosaki and he actually makes a statement in his book and he is a very financially prudent persona and he has seen trouble coming long before the rest of us did. But he actually makes a statement in one of his books, you know, it is not evil to love money.

Well, no, that is what the Bible said.

“For the love of money is the root of all evil.”¹³

Because he says, “which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”¹⁴

It is the idea that if we covet all the time, we may have a lot of sorrow in our life.

So even if the giver is preparing for a special need, they need to have reassurance from the Lord that their plans are according to God’s will.

Here is another thing. Givers tend to reject pressure appeals. Now that may be a good thing. But why I put this under misuses is that sometimes the thing that people are feeling pressured to give to is an urgent need. It is a real need. And a giver may so react to somebody coming up and saying, “You know, listen. We have got this need and it is kind of urgent and is there anything you can do with it?” they may just totally reject the idea without checking with the mind of God to find out, hey, is that really something I ought to be giving to?

So I would encourage any of you that have the gift of giving or any of us, period, that when we hear about a need, pray about that and give God time to speak to your heart, because it may be that that really is something you ought to give to even though it may be [?] or you learned about it in a way that you would not have preferred.

Here is another thing. Givers can give too sparingly to their own family. Have you ever heard that saying? The cobbler’s children have no shoes. Or in my house it is that the software engineer’s kids computers don’t work. You know, or something like that.

The idea is they could be so busy giving to others of their time, their energy and their assets that they are not even really seeing the needs up close and personal of their own family. And I want to tell you something. I had a ... I hesitate to even call him a friend now because he is so not living for the Lord that he doesn’t even want to talk to me, but we built a house a number of years ago and he took all of his excess income and he poured it into this school that he started a, quote, Christian school, unquote, in order, because he thought that was a ministry the Lord wanted him to have.

¹³ 1 Timothy 6:10.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Meanwhile he never put flooring down in his house or carpet or anything. It is just bare plywood floors. So for the next decade they are living in that house and there is nothing on the floor. It is just bare plywood.

Let me tell you guys something. Your wife deserves carpet. Or she deserves wood flooring, not plywood, but something pretty. You need to build your wife's nest before you just pour something into some thing you feel like God has called you. You know what? God called you to be married before he called you to ministry. You need to take care of your wife first. She is your priority.

If you don't show the same concern and care for your family that you show for others, your family is going to feel like you don't really love them.

Here is another thing. Givers can give to projects instead of people. So if a giver focuses on the needs of people, they can be unduly attracted to projects, so, you know, so in other words they can look at it and everything is a project. Suddenly it is not about people anymore, it is about projects. Kind of like people with the gift of exhortation look at you as a project sometimes and your desire for measuring value may prompt you to, you know, build a memorial to your own generosity.

It is kind of like, well, I give, but I want a plaque on it that says, you know, in memory of or in honor of or given by so and so. Ok? Again, that defeats the whole thing of giving in secret.

The emphasis in Scripture, by the way is giving to the necessity of the saints. Ok, this is the phrase that we need to be... when Paul took up a collection he took up a collection of the necessity of the saints, not for their wants, not to build a memorial, not to put up plaques anywhere, but because there were believers that had genuine needs.

Here is another misuse. Givers can cause people to look to themselves rather than God. And so the thing is if a giver lets others know when he is giving, it is kind of like...and sometime givers will do this. They want the notoriety that comes with it. If a giver gives to somebody and then tells them about it, it may be that they want that person to look to them or they want the notoriety and what happens is the people they are giving to fail to remember this is a gift from God. And they start displacing their focus off of God onto the people.

So the giver, not using their gift properly can be in danger of attracting carnal people the wrong motives to themselves. And these carnal individuals will appeal to human inclinations and then they will extract funds. They will ask for funds. They will try to get funds that maybe God isn't moving them to do.

So givers can also wait too long to give. That is another misuse. And if you are not obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, you may lose the joy of seeing God work through you to meet a need in response to prayer.

And if God prompts you, I just encourage you, whatever he prompts you to do, don't want. Because usually God's promptings are with specific timings as well.

All right. So let's close with this. There are some special instructions given to the giver in verse 13 of this chapter. Number one he says, "Distributing to the necessity of saints."¹⁵

Give to the needs of people and ministries. Don't look for opportunities to build memorials with your name on them. And then you need to be given to hospitality.

Now this is an interesting thing. You need to be prepared. Back then they didn't have Motel Six and Comfort Inn and Hilton Garden Inn and all these things so when you traveled to a town you had to find someone who was hospitable that would bring you in or you stayed in a house of ill repute. Those were your two choices.

To be given to hospitality means be prepared to give to strangers. Be prepared to meet the needs of strangers even though you don't really have any control over how the gift is used, but listen to the promptings. Is the Spirit prompting you to do something? The Spirit may be prompting you not to give and if that is the case, you shouldn't.

Let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

Father, I want to thank you for all the times that givers have met special needs in my life. I also want to thank you, Lord, for those whose gifts enabled the ministry here. I thank you for those who give regularly and faithfully. I thank you for the work that is being done through gifts to support missionaries like Jeff Rains and the families in our church who are involved in ministry and how we are able to support those ministries as well. And, Father, just for taking care of the things that you have entrusted us with. And, Father, I just pray that you would help each of us, whether or not we have the gift of giving, to be more responsive to promptings of your Spirit to give as you lead us. And, Father, help us to remember that it is not your money, but that it is yours and that any gift we give that you are the one providing those funds. Help us to be good stewards, but help us also to hold all things loosely for your glory. Father, be with our services now and just glorify yourself through them, for it is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thank you.

¹⁵ Romans 12:13.