



GIVING IS

LOVE

Giving is...

Giving allows us to give expression to our passions, interests, and feelings by offering ourselves and our resources to help advance them. As Christians, giving is an integral part of our faith and a vital part of our profession to the world that we are followers of Jesus.

We would like to discover together some deeper aspects of giving in all its forms. In this article, we'll focus on giving is love. Upcoming Vision Newsletters will introduce faith, joy, worship, mission, sacrifice, and secret – all aspects of giving.

We pray that these articles will serve to inspire a new understanding of Christian giving and a new desire to demonstrate God's love to the world through a renewed willingness to share what we've been blessed with.

Giving is love...

Our desire to give begins and ends with God. John wrote in 1 John 4:16, *God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.* It is love that has brought us from the brink of despair into fellowship with God. It is the love God has shown us that fuels our passion to share with others what we have been given. When we recognize that we are unworthy to receive all that God has given us, we must respond in love towards our God and our neighbors. This love prompts us to give freely from what we've been blessed with.

Following God's example

We're often told to hold on to the things that are most precious to us, and for good reason. Whatever we consider most precious is very valuable to us – it is instinctual for us to safeguard these things. Because of this, we may be reluctant to share what is precious to us out of fear that we will not get them back or have our generosity reciprocated. But let us understand that giving

is love. And our guiding example for how to love is God, Himself, who is love. We must learn to love as He loves – unconditionally and without concern for reciprocation. So how do we learn to give unconditionally from those things that are most precious to us, our very best? Follow God's example.

In John 3:16, the Bible says, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* God's creation is sin-filled and broken. And yet, this has not deterred His love from us. Instead, He further proved His love by giving the very best He had to all people: His son, Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of His Son was not given for just the people of that time, but rather for all people in all times. And so, we can feel that God continues to look upon us with love.



In Romans 5:8, Paul wrote, *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* This verse speaks to the unconditional nature of God's love for humankind. The sacrifice that Christ brought on the cross for sinners showed that there was no activity, no good work, which anyone could do to receive God's grace and reprieve from their sins. It was only by the gift of Jesus Christ that redemption could be received. *While we were still sinners,* Jesus gave His life for us. God's love is unconditionally given to His creation and we are called, as disciples of Jesus, to share this unconditional love we have been given.

Giving reflects three commandments

We know that meeting the needs of others is important to Jesus because it serves both God and His children. This importance is laid out in three commandments that Jesus gave:

- *Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. (Matthew 22:37-38)*
- *And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)*
- *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (John 13:34)*

Throughout Jesus’ life, we see the compassion that He had for the needs of those around Him. He gave beyond what the law required at that time because of the compassion and love He had for people, and because of His desire to do His Father’s will. Out of this same desire, we see that a Christian gives beyond the tithe to honor God and to provide others with what they need because we feel compassion for the needs of others. Jesus gave beyond the law. He gave everything, including His life, because He loved God, and thereby became the embodiment of God’s love towards us. It was what God wanted and what we needed. Christian giving is a function of our love towards God and each other, and is our response to meet the needs of others.



Jesus teaches further, through the parables, specific attitudes and actions that connect giving with serving others. In Luke 10:30-35, you can read the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan saw the need of another and responded with the compassion and love of God. But he didn’t just do the minimum and take the injured person to a place to receive help. Instead, he bandaged him, set him on his own animal, took him to an inn, and then he established a plan with the innkeeper so that the man would be fully cared for even after the Good Samaritan had moved on. When we give out of the love of God, we will go beyond the minimum of what is expected and we will try our best to fully

care for a person’s needs. You may be saying to yourself that it’s not possible for you to do that. And this is true; this kind of compassion and love is impossible when you rely on only yourself. But, when you are fully surrendered to God and moved by the Holy Spirit, **you can love unconditionally** and go beyond what is expected.

Believers give with the confidence that their reward is assured by their belief in Jesus Christ, and it awaits them in the kingdom of God. But this is not why we give. When our giving is a response prompted by the love we have received, no thought is spared for what we have given or what we will gain as a reward. This perspective, based on the parable of the sheep and goats found in Matthew 25, is expounded upon further in the third session of the October small group discussions.

What do I have to give?

Those who *have* give to those who *have not*. This is what God wants for us. In a sense, it is why we have been given what we have, in order that we may give it away. We receive God’s merciful love through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, both freely and undeservedly. We can express God’s merciful love to others when we give to them. 2 Corinthians 8:9 reads, *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.* We are only rich through Christ because of His love for us, and we can share that wealth with others. In some way or another, most of us have experienced a period of poverty – whether that meant having little money or receiving little love. These experiences help us to be compassionate to those we see in a similar state. If you can relate to someone in need and be empathetic of their circumstances, then let your love for them be genuine. Work hard to meet their needs because



you already have all that you need to do so. And if all you have to give to a person is the love of Jesus, that is the greatest gift that can ever be shared!



Who are the needy that we are called to give to? Engage the Holy Spirit to lead you towards those who are in need of help. They are all around you, in your neighborhoods, workplaces, families, congregations... Believe that you have been placed and equipped by God, and are in position to serve a purpose for His kingdom each day. Strive to live with your eyes and heart open, and be Spirit-guided as you seek to share the love and compassion of the Lord. You don't have to do this work alone. As Paul taught the early church, the community of believers together can identify the needs of others and utilize their shared gifts and resources to aid groups of people who are in dire circumstances.

Conclusion

Giving is love. God is love. Our desire and willingness to give is rooted in the love that has been showered upon us by our God. Giving what we have is a reflection of this love back to Him and to all around us. Our Heavenly Father has led the way in showing us how love drives giving when He sent His Son to redeem humankind with His sacrifice. Through Jesus Christ, we have been made rich, and God has supplied us with the things we need in order to be able to care for the needs of others. Let's be captured by the love of God and unconditionally share our love for Him and for those in need by sharing and caring for others.

We demonstrate our love, for God and others, when we give. - VA / MB

Believe that you have been placed and equipped by God, and are in position to serve a purpose for His kingdom each day.