

A close-up photograph of a gift wrapped in brown kraft paper. A red twine string is wrapped around the package in a crisscross pattern. Several green pine needles are tucked into the string. Two hands, wearing a green textured sweater, are gently holding the gift. The background is dark and out of focus.

*Giving  
is  
Secret*

We are on a journey of becoming whom God has called us to be.

It is a never-ending journey, but it is one that can be filled with much joy when we recognize that our almighty, loving God is with us each step of the way. While the journey can be a joyful one, it is also one filled with struggles and challenges as we battle to defeat our old nature and allow the new creation to blossom within us and flow out in all we do. As we grow into the likeness of Jesus, we begin to separate our thoughts from the worldview of today and, instead, see the world with a kingdom perspective. We are no longer driven by the desire to be known and the need to put everything we do on display for others to see. We no longer need to show what we are doing for others and try to tell as many people as possible. We stop shining a light on ourselves and focus instead on becoming whom God created us to be and doing all things to glorify Him.

## *What is the motivation behind our desire to give?*

What is the motivation behind our desire to give? Do we share the good things that God has blessed us with to draw attention to ourselves and gain the praise of our fellow man? Or are we willing to share and give without any desire or need for it to be known? When we are conscious of the omniscient and omnipresent nature of God, that He sees everything that we do and knows what motivates us, we should not be fearful or ashamed, but be humbled and rejoice that He knows us so well. Then, in a god-fearing manner, we give in secret, knowing that our audience of One is the only audience that matters. Knowing that we are loved by God should free us from the entanglements of arrogance and the desire for self-praise, and allow us to bask in the light of His glory so that we can reflect His love to the world around us.



*...do not do your charitable deeds before men*

In Matthew 6:1-4, Jesus teaches a lesson to the Pharisees, and to all of us, on keeping our giving a secret to encourage humility and avoid self-promotion. Jesus said,

*“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”*

**Matthew 6:1-2**

Jesus warned that the recognition and admiration of others is the reward the hypocrites receive from their generosity, but their action is not rewarded by God. Plainly stated, Jesus teaches us not to seek an audience when we give. Have you ever delayed your involvement in helping someone in need because there was no one else around to see you do it? What message does that send to the one who is in need and what does it say about the condition of your heart? If we tend to only give openly in the presence of others, then we must think that our gift is quite noteworthy. But giving in secret implies a certain modesty as we realize that our giving is quite negligible compared to the giving of the eternal One. He is the great giver of all things and our giving will never outshine His. All that we have been given comes from God, and He places us where we can share what we

have received. Since He is the only audience that matters and He always sees all, we should never delay helping because there isn't a crowd to witness our actions.

Next, Jesus says that there is no need to announce your work when you care for the needy so that others will know what you did and honor you with praise. As we read in the Gospels about all that Jesus did while on earth, we never once see Him seeking praise for His works of kindness. Instead, we often read of Him retreating to be alone and to pray. *God is the One who has equipped us* with what we need to be able to help those in need. When we truly recognize that and know we are His humble servant, we realize the foolishness in making a loud fuss about what we are doing. Even if we may find reasons to justify why sharing our good deeds is okay or necessary, we don't have to take advantage of any of the platforms available (i.e. social media) in order to make it known to everyone how great and generous we are. As we grow in our faith, we know how meritless it is to seek the praise of our fellow man for what God has done through us. It is such a rewarding experience when we are able to jump in and give much needed help to someone, and then simply walk away with the joy and fulfillment of knowing that we used the tools given to us by God to share His love with someone. If you find that you need to celebrate what you've done, give praise and worship to God, and make a loud noise in His direction.

*"But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."*

**Matthew 6:3-4**

Jesus is teaching about the motives behind giving when He talks about your left hand and right hand. Are you motivated to give because you know that you will get something back in return? Are you only willing to help someone else because you know they will reciprocate your "kindness"? Our motives to give must be pure. They must be born out of our love for God and our love for others. In the example of giving that Jesus shares in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, He teaches what it looks like to give without thought of reciprocation or fanfare. The Samaritan had compassion upon

the man who had been wounded. He bandaged him, took him to a safe place, and cared for him completely.



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Then the man departs only with a promise to repay whatever is spent to care for this stranger in need.

Nowhere in the short story do we see the Samaritan seeking or receiving praise, nor does he say he'll come back to get what he was owed. What drove him to show such mercy and compassion? He was simply fulfilling the commandments to love God and love his neighbor (see Luke 10:26-28).

Our love for God drives us to be obedient to His will and moves us to be open-hearted towards others. As children of God, we must learn to give without any thought of what we will receive in return because we know that our heavenly Father will always care for us. This is contrary to human and societal ways; for some, this is a way of business and of life. But God rewards us each day in ways we recognize and truly in many more ways that we don't, and He will continue to do so for all eternity. Simply, our relationship with Him is the greatest reward. An old choir hymn expresses:

*The greatest goal this side of heaven...that is a gift which God has given, it is to be His child in life.*

**The Greatest Goal**

As we are becoming whom God has called us to be, let us rejoice in giving in secret because we know that our giving furthers the work of the kingdom and glorifies the One who is most deserving of praise. - LRK / MJB