

The Abundance of Giving

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: B130211

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When you think about coming to church, what aspect do you look forward to the most?

For the sake of this discussion, let's assume your answer is something spiritually noble—nothing vain or selfish like wanting people to see you dressed in your finest clothes, showing off a new car, or trying to sell goods or services to friends at church. Instead, let's assume the best—that whatever it is you look forward to most is somehow related to ministry.

Some people might say the teaching keeps them coming back each week. Others would say the music. For some believers, it might be the deep relationships with other Christians they find through their churches—relationships that they can't cultivate elsewhere. Others might just appreciate the temporary relief from the pressures of life, work, and the world.

But let me suggest something to you: If we really understand Scripture—particularly some specific promises from Jesus—the thing you should look forward to the most is the *offering*.

God's Word clearly teaches that our giving is actually a direct pipeline to His blessings. In fact, two simple statements from the Lord ought to make every Christian eager and thrilled for opportunities to give. If Scripture had nothing else to say about giving—if it was only these two promises from Christ—it should still be enough to compel us to line up and give generously, abundantly, and sacrificially.

The first of those promises is found in Luke 6:38, where Jesus told His followers, "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

If we want to receive from the Lord, we need to be willing to sacrifice. You'll hear the apostle Paul echo the same sentiments in 2 Corinthians 9:6, where he writes, "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." It's a simple principle but one that we too often ignore: God is going to measure out His blessings to you in accord with what you've measured out in your giving. If you give a lot, you will receive a lot; as Scripture says, it will be "pressed down, shaken together, running over."

The imagery Christ used in Luke—the idea of pouring blessing into our laps—comes from the ancient Middle Eastern grain market. People would go into the grain market to purchase, literally, a *lap-full* of grain. The loose material of their garments extended all the way to the ground and was belted at the waist with a sash. When they went into the grain market, they would simply pull up some of that garment, looping it through the sash to create a huge pocket. The grain would be dumped into the makeshift pouch, literally filling their laps (cf. Ruth 3:15).

This would have been an everyday experience for the crowd listening to Jesus in Luke 6, and they would have immediately understood the meaning of the illustration. The Lord wants to overflow your life with His blessings, and those blessings correspond to your own generosity—in fact, they're triggered by it. Your giving is a direct route to the abundant blessings of God in your life.

There is a comforting reassurance in Christ's illustration. Regardless of how much you give, you can't outgive the Lord. You give and He is always faithful to give back more.

That gracious promise alone should drive us to be cheerful, generous givers, but Christ had more to say. In Acts 20:35, Luke attributes these words to Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

As abundant as God's blessings are in our lives, what we give away results in even *greater* blessing. The concept is counterintuitive to our society's mindset—we're encouraged to accumulate and save as much as we can. But God's Word is clear that believers are to avoid the love of money (Matthew 6:24, Hebrews 13:5), and this promise from Christ is consistent with those exhortations.

Greedily storing up wealth and resources limits their usefulness to your own selfish purposes. It's far better to surrender them to the purposes of God and reap the tremendous blessings of being part of what He's accomplishing in the lives of His people.

Faithful, sacrificial giving also knits you into the life of your church. In one simple act you're helping support your pastor and the rest of your church's staff, meet the needs of missionaries supported by your church, provide for the maintenance of your church building and other facilities, fulfill physical and financial needs within your congregation, and much more. And on top of all that, the Lord uses your support of ministries like Grace to You to reach people in your part of the world and beyond with the truth of Scripture.

That doesn't mean we should recklessly give away everything—God's Word clearly advocates wise management of your money (cf. Matthew 25:14-30). But if we're going to store up treasure, we ought to store it "in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys" (Luke 12:33). Give generously, and count on the Lord to be generous with you.

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