

You Can't Out-Give God

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James River Church

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Please open your Bibles to Luke chapter 6. We will begin with verse 38. ESV. Jesus speaking. This is Luke's version of the sermon on the mount where we read this. "Give, and it will be given to you." What do you have to do if you want God to give to you? You have to give. It's not, it will be given to you, and you can give. It's give. Have you ever heard someone say, "If God gives it, I will give it?" Well, you know, yes and no. You and I must do what we can do. Then God will do what ONLY HE can do. He says, give, and it will be given to you. How will it be given? "Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."

I want to give you three principles.

1. We receive according to what we give.

We receive according to what we give. It's the law of the harvest. God set it up that way. But you never have to worry that if you plant watermelon seed, you will get cauliflower. Praise God, right? Whatever I sow, that is what I reap. Life is set up that way. It's like, the words that we speak frame the reality that we live in. If you doubt that, just go home and start speaking negative hurtful words the minute you walk in the door. Watch the kind of reality you live in. Go home and speak life-giving words. Speak words of affirmation. Speak words of kindness. Watch the reality you live in. We can frame what we sow. We're going to reap what's true in all of life.

In Luke chapter 6:37, ESV, the verse preceding the verse we just looked at, "Judge not, and you will not be judged." If you live a life that goes around judging people, then don't be surprised when you have a lot of people judging you. Notice it says, "Condemn not, and you will not be condemned." You leave a kind of life that's not condemning people and you're not going to be condemned. "Forgive, and you will be forgiven." This is a very interesting point. If you forgive others, you're going to be forgiven, what, by them? Hopefully, by God.

In Matthew 6, watch this in verses 14-15 NLT, "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you." You forgive, which is much smaller than His forgiveness of you, right? It's multiplied back to you on a much larger scale because that is what God does. Now this is also true when it comes to giving. Jesus is the one who said it's more blessed to give than to receive. But there's an additional blessing, the generous soul prospers, the Bible says.

And you find this all over scripture that God blesses as we give. For example, in Proverbs 11:24-25 NLT, "Give freely and become wealthier." Now there it is. That's in the Bible. That's repeated in the Bible. Not those exact words, but the principle. You sow sparingly, you reap sparingly. You sow a lot; you reap a lot. You are the one, we are the ones, if we give freely, you become wealthier.

This whole thing on giving, the reason we take time with it is because it is counter intuitive. Humanly, we would say, if I give, then I have less. And God says, no, that's not the way it works. In His kingdom, the way it works is when you give, you have more. You say, are you saying I should give so I can get? I give, knowing that I don't have to be afraid to give because I'm never going to have less.

Saints through the ages have known this. The great Puritan, John Bunyan, was imprisoned and wrote Pilgrim's Progress, one of the great classics of all time. He said this, "There was a man, some called him mad the more he gave. The more he gave, the more he had." It doesn't make sense but it's true. "Be stingy and lose everything. The generous will prosper." In Proverbs 3:9-10 NLT, "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce." In other words, put God first in your giving. In your spending, put Him at the top. "Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine." God will bless you.

In 2 Corinthians 9: 6 NLT, "Remember this – a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop." In other words, for a farmer to go out and say, well, I'm only going to put in the ground five seeds but I'm expecting a bumper crop. That's ridiculous. We all say that. Common sense tells you that. But if he sows generously, the more seed he puts in the ground, that he gives away, the greater his harvest. It's an illustration from nature and it's where Paul is talking about money. You and I, we receive according to what we give.

2. There's a second principle. We receive more than we give.

Luke 6:38 ESV, "Give, and it will be given to you." Who's going to do the giving? God's going to give, and He can give in a lot of ways. He can give through people, circumstances, all kinds of things, but He will multiply the money back to you. And how does He do it? "Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap."

I don't know about you, but every time I read this scripture, I always think of a box of Frosted Corn Flakes cereal. You've seen Tony the Tiger on the box, right? Have you ever opened it up and thought, how much cereal is really in this box? You know on the box it says, contents may have settled. But for the sake of illustration, let's say one box of cereal reflects our giving. God does say, well, I'm going to give you one box back. The nature and character of God is generous.

In the book of James in the New Testament, James says about God, if you lack wisdom, God will give back generously. God is never going to owe a person anything. He loves to give you more than you asked for. God is not only going to give back to you, but He's also going to give more to you, pressed down and shaken together. He keeps pressing down on the cereal you gave, adding more and more before He gives it back to you. This looks like this is new to you. It is all over scripture. God is a generous God. We don't talk about money a lot, but it is important. I want to see you be blessed because I know this principle and God's promise is true. God blesses people when they're generous. It's not just church. It's not just a building, it is missions, it's church, it's your tithe. So, God says, He presses it down.

For illustration, in your mind's eye, watch me add another box to the container and press it down and shake it together. Now let's add a third box to our container. God is going to put as much into your container as it will hold and then add more so that it is running over.

Is that the way you see God? Do you see God wanting to do as much as He possibly can for you to bless you? In the same size box you gave God, you might be able to press down and compact together six boxes of cereal. But God doesn't stop there. He's the God who keeps pouring and pouring and pouring even more. He is a God who blesses people to overflowing. This is everywhere in the scripture.

It's in Malachi Chapter 3. "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse of God. Test me in this. God says put me to the test. See if I don't open the windows of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you can't contain it." This is the generous nature of our generous God. God delights in blessing. God will never owe a person anything. God says, you did that for me, but you're not going to do anything for me. I will not fail to reward you, both in this life and in the next.

And honestly if we take a ratio of one to seven for the cereal example. That's very conservative if we look in the gospels where Jesus said there is no one who has left his house, or wife, or brothers, or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive 100 times more in this life and eternal life in the life to come. How much is 100 times? It's a 10,000 percent return on your investment. I'm just saying that God gives back. He is a generous, gracious giver.

3. Now, the third thing I want you to know - we determine how much we receive.

This is very interesting. Look at it. Luke 6:38 ESV, "For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." God says, what kind of measurement do you want me to use in blessing your life? And whatever measurement you use, if you sow a little, you reap a little. You're still going to end up with more. If you sow a lot, you are going to reap a lot. The idea is, you're never going to have a time in your life when you will out-give God. That's absolutely impossible!

And that's the joy of giving, that I never have to be afraid of giving. You don't have to wonder if God will bless this time. I want you to know the joy of seeing God for you supernaturally do what you could never do for yourself. I want you to be a part of something that is supernatural, and you can be sure Heaven will credit it to your account. But you and I determine the measure that will be measured back to us. The more we sow, the larger the harvest.

What if, in our example, I used 10 boxes of cereal instead of one and we pressed it down, shook it together and made it run over? Instead of getting 7 boxes back, when it was pressed down and shaken together, we would end up with 70 boxes. This is indicative of God's gracious goodness to us. God is generous. He wants to show himself powerful in your life. Like everything else in the Kingdom of God, it comes down to a step of faith.

If you have never tithed, I would rather see you develop the regular systematic giving first. But if you want to go over and above, you can put this principle into practice today. You must find what works for you. I'm just asking you to do what the Lord has called you to do.