

Deuteronomy 15:10

Give freely and spontaneously. Don't have a stingy heart. The way you handle matters like this triggers God, your God's blessing in everything you do, all your work and ventures. There are always going to be **poor** and needy people among you. So I command you: Always be generous, open purse and hands, give to your neighbors in trouble, your **poor** and hurting neighbors.

Matthew 26 6-9 When Jesus was at Bethany, a guest of Simon the Leper, a woman came up to him as he was eating dinner and anointed him with a bottle of very expensive perfume. When the disciples saw what was happening, they were furious. "That's criminal! This could have been sold for a lot and the money handed out to the poor." 10-13 When Jesus realized what was going on, he intervened. "Why are you giving this woman a hard time? She has just done something wonderfully significant for me. You will have the poor with you every day for the rest of your lives, but not me. When she poured this perfume on my body, what she really did was anoint me for burial. You can be sure that wherever in the whole world the Message is preached, what she has just done is going to be remembered and admired."

Where this sermon came from:

Conversation with Don the commodore of Club Cruceros (define)

People with a common cause

Burned boat

Don asked about my read on the young man

My perception...

I then launched into a mini dissertation about

The nature of giving:

Unites community

Helps individuals develop a heart of service

At this point I throttle back

I did not talk about all that God stuff

Don knows who we are

But I did go on talk about the basic dynamics at play in the situation at hand:

We give because we know that it is the right thing to do

We feel in our heart the motivation to give...we didn't talk about the source of that motivation

As we respond to our heart motivation we move in a direction that distances us from the physical (leisure time, our comfort, our money or our stuff) and we move toward the spiritual...we achieve spiritual growth.

If, as we saw in this case, if we give up our resources (take a loss) and our expectations are not met...if the gratitude factor isn't to our liking...or in some other instance if the funds weren't well managed or properly disbursed as earmarked. How do we react...how do we respond.

How would you respond?

- a. Pray for the gift of discernment.
- b. Send them a bill for total materials and labor
- c. Make sure "that" never happens again
- d. Only make gifts through a recognized and know dependable religious or para-religious organization
- e. Only "give at the office"
- f. Only give over the phone to televangelists

None of the above

Responses?

Digression:

What do you pray for when you pray?

Healing because you're hurting

Companionship because you're alone

Friendship because you feel like a stranger or outsider

Finances because you can't make ends meet

Peace because you are troubled in your soul

Direction because you are at a crossroads in your life

I pray for wisdom

Because I am an Idiot

Out there somewhere is a village full of people wondering where is Milton

1 Cor 3:18 Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise.

I believe I am pretty well under way

God answers prayers

I'm still an idiot but with occasional spurts of wisdom

Here's the spurt

I count this as wisdom as I don't know where this could have come from other than the Holy Spirit bringing it on as needed.

Speaking as an idiot imagine my surprise...

I told Don that I had some thoughts about the outcome of their rescue...I would only share them with him since he had asked...

It went something like this:

When we give willingly in love we trade physical loss for spiritual gain

If we give unwillingly out of a sense of duty or obligation we trade physical loss for well... nothing really...possibly for some illusion of goodness but nothing more

By giving in love we develop our heart... we soften it and develop generosity and love. What we gain in personal development far exceeds the value of what we give up physically.

What we give and share in giving as a community builds up and develops our community... what we gain as a community far exceeds what we have given...our community becomes stronger and better and even more responsive to needs

The giving we do is, at the end of the day, more about us and our development than it is about those we are helping. So once we have seen need and responded to it in our hearts and with our hands the gifting is complete.

So what if the gifted is not as grateful as we would like.

So what if the gift isn't fully understood or cherished

So what if he decides in a year to sell the boat, house, car, church building.

If we give a gift... it is given... completely

If we maintain even the finest threads of attachment to the stuff we violate the gift.

We use the term "no strings attached"

Once the gift is given it is over...

If it's not over...then it's not given

Here's the danger
We feel the urge to give
We respond in love accepting an opportunity to trade physical loss for spiritual gain
Something tells us the gift didn't quite go as planned
We resent the gifted
We share our resentment with our community generating hours of delightful bickering and self-righteousness
We resolve to avoid getting snookered in the future...to be more careful...to hold back
Our community becomes less trusting and less willing to extend itself
Our hearts individually and collectively become colder and harder
Our stuff is better guarded...our spirit denied

We have traded our time, our effort, our comfort, our stuff, and our money for a cold hard heart. We have lost in the end physically and spiritually...It is a pretty human response to take a hit and fall back

Shame on the poor...darn them to heck...how can they be so inconsiderate...no wonder they're destitute...they don't deserve any better

I am exaggerating but I haven't been that far from this emotional place...has anybody else ever fallen in this trap...take a hit and fall back

It is a trap...but there is a work around

Forgive and move ahead

If we do what we are supposed to do as Christians and remain alert to what God is doing in around and through us we see an opportunity:

Rather than every little disappointment being a setback we let the Holy Spirit make it a springboard.

Rather than fix blame and fallback...and try to even things out a bit...forgive and move ahead

1 Corinthians 13:3

If I give everything I own to the **poor** and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say,

what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love. Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, **Doesn't keep score of the sins of others**, Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, **Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.**

Forgive and move ahead

But we don't want to be taken advantage of!
Do you want to be taken advantage of?
This is hard...and I'm not good at it

Email...

We want to be counted among the faithful...We want to be like Jesus don't we...well...Jesus wanted to be taken advantage of
He wanted people who didn't begin to deserve or appreciate the magnitude of what He gave to gain physically, mentally, and spiritually by what He lost.

The mark of a true servant is that all is given completely for those served

Religion is a set of clear beliefs and practices with accountability for requirements that are fulfilled or unfulfilled.

Is Christianity a religion?

No!

Christianity is a relationship...a love relationship...actually a love triangle
It's God, other people, and you...in that order

Good News!

If Christianity is not a religion then giving is a not a requirement...there are no dues...no fines...no overdue notices

More Good News!

If it's a relationship then sharing in love is a natural part of what you do in a relationship...it is your heartfelt desire

Are we doing that?

Yes? Good news you're in love watch for the email

No? Bad news watch out for drunk drivers with bald tires cause you don't want to die yet

Proverbs 30:7 has a pretty neat little prayer

*And then he prayed, "God, I'm asking for two things before I die; don't refuse me— Banish lies from my lips and liars from my presence. Give me enough food to live on, neither too much nor too little. If I'm too full, I might get independent, saying, 'God? Who needs him?' If I'm **poor**, I might steal and dishonor the name of my God."*

God wired us up real good to know love and serve Him

The world short circuits that quite a bit sometimes

But it can't erase the basic program...God's people were made to know love and serve Him and each other

Who are God's people...all of us

There are people out there who don't Him and yet their hearts do.

Your time and other resources are needed to help some of them to forgive and move on...

To let go of what religion has done to them and move on to what relationship can do

Maybe you are in between...still maturing...still falling in

love...rewiring...rounding out the square wheels on the relationship

...keep heart

...In God's time

I didn't tell Don everything I said here.

Wisdom tells us that only God opens the door

...any idiot can be an usher

...if you need a place to sit let me know

I told Don that one day the young man would probably look back and see it all clearly...Wow...think what it will look like then.

Don felt pretty good about that.

I just felt surprised by our conversation...

Cool huh?