

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

Proverbs 31

What are some things that we can be generous with?

There are many things, but the ones that first come to my mind are those with which I tend to be the stingiest. My time, my money, and my affection.

What do you have the most trouble being generous with?

God has not given us any of our resources for us to hoard them. That is a lesson that He tried to teach the Israelites by giving them only the manna they would need for a single day (though more when they would not be able to gather the next day). God provides what we need when we need it, sometimes moment by moment. If we have not come to a place of trusting God for the things we need and experiencing Him providing in that way, we may struggle with giving to others, thinking that God may not provide more if we give away what we have.

We may think that if we give away the money that we were planning to use for that new pair of shoes, we may never have money for new shoes again. Or we may feel so tired and drained that if we give one more moment of listening or one more patient and encouraging word that we will have given away our last bit of emotional strength and that we simply may break.

Have you ever felt this way? Describe a time when you did not want to give because of fear that you would not be able to replenish what you are giving away?

Let's take a look at some biblical examples of generous women.

Ruth demonstrates a great deal of generosity to a person in her life that we may least expect. Ruth was generous to her mother-in-law, Naomi. And this was after her husband had died, cutting the tie that Ruth had to Naomi. She didn't have the factor of keeping family peace. She could have simply remarried and washed her hands of any responsibility to her former mother-in-law as Naomi herself suggested. But instead she chose to journey with Naomi to a foreign land, do physical labor every day in order to survive, and bring back what she had gathered to share with her former mother-in-law. Ruth was generous with her time, her resources, and her love.

Rebekah was generous with a stranger. She was willing to not only draw water for a man that she had absolutely no obligation to, who was no doubt much more physically capable of doing the task than she, but for his large, thirsty camels, as well! Of course, this resulted in her later marriage to Isaac because the stranger she drew water for was seeking out a wife for his master's son, but Rebekah was not aware of this at the time. She simply had a giving spirit. Rebekah demonstrated a spirit of hospitality, a virtue that is closely tied with generosity. As women, we often have the opportunity to be hospitable, and yet we often overlook that chance. Whether in our homes, our cars, or even a public

"She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens.

She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out her hands to the needy."

Proverbs 31:15, 20

place, making the setting we are in a place that others can share and find a haven, a place of comfort is a wonderful opportunity to share the love of God with those we come into contact with. Hospitality is a combination of sharing our time, resources, space, and love with others. Though for a portion of his life Jesus didn't have a permanent residence of his own on earth, he still showed a spirit of hospitality as he dined with those who were often rejected. He did not offer hospitality only to those who were lovely and likable, but to all. We are to do the same. Rebekah did this as she offered hospitality to a man that she did not know and who was probably quite unappealing due to the dirty and dusty travel that he had just done.

Hannah probably demonstrated the greatest level of generosity when she gave her long-awaited and much-desired son over to the Lord. For many of us today, committing our children to the Lord seems to be more of a request to God to keep them safe and to draw them into relationship with Him. However, this was not the case in Hannah's life. Giving her son to the Lord actually meant a physical and relational separation from him. At a young age Samuel was taken to the temple and turned over to the priest to serve in the temple. Hannah was willing to give what was probably her most valued treasure.

Which of these women would you best relate to? Which example would be hard to follow?

While the heart characteristic of generosity is obviously behind these actions, knowing how to become a generous person is not so obvious. It begins with the three elements mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:13: faith, hope, and love.

Placing our faith in the fact that God is our provider (and a consistent, dependable, generous provider) allows us the freedom to give openhandedly to others. When we place our hope in Him and are secure in the fact that we will have all we need, we can give without apprehension or hesitation.

We can also trust Him to take care of whatever we hand over to Him. Just as Hannah offered her son over to the Lord, and He proved Himself faithful in caring for Samuel and doing great things in and through his life, we can know that however big or small our offering, the Lord will do greater things with it and take better care of it than we ever could.


God's love for people is another motivator that can prompt us to give freely. When we have God's perspective on the importance of people over the importance of possessions, we can see that giving our resources is a small sacrifice to make in order to help meet the needs of one God cares so passionately for.

When I come back to my list of things that I am unwilling to give of freely, I find that God is the One who supplies all of them in the amount that I need. I have also seen from experience that when I am trusting God to provide my needs and seeking His direction on giving, I never regret anything I give.

God has promised to provide for our physical and financial needs (Matthew 6:30-31), He is the one who numbers our days (Psalm 39:4), He is the source of love and has poured it out freely to us so that we may also give of it freely, and He has challenged us to test and prove Him in that He will respond to our own giving with overflowing blessings of His own (Malachi 3:10).

"But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'"

Matthew 6:30-31



What do you need to do in response to this lesson?
