

The Gift of Spiritual Giving

An Inspired Essay by Rev. Lloyd Strom

Giving and Receiving

The concept of '*Spiritual Giving*' is often misunderstood by those who are drawn to a spiritually oriented life. Although such individuals have embraced many of the principles of Spiritual Giving, they have yet to assemble them into a practice that will produce a tangible form of prosperity in their lives.

For example, most people have heard it said that "*it is better to give than to receive.*" Yet, we are seldom offered an explanation as to what this means, or why it is so. Without such understanding, many who *say* that they believe this to be true, will seldom put this platitude into practice. Or, if they do, they will often embrace the *false nobility* of an impoverished life.

This occurs because of an error in their dualistic thinking that has caused them to believe that if it is good to *give*, then it must be bad to *receive*. However, the deeper understanding of this Principle is that *giving* must precede *receiving*.

For example, if a farmer does not *give* his fields the seed that they need to produce a crop, then he can hardly expect to *receive* a bountiful harvest at the end of the growing season.

God is Our Source

Another Principle that is often embraced by spiritually oriented individuals is the understanding that '*God is our source.*' Yet, in times of need, we consistently turn to the world as the source of our prosperity. We will look to family, friends, employers, bankers, politicians and the generosity of others to resolve our financial situations.

However, what we often fail to see is that our prosperity does not come from what we get from *others*. Our prosperity comes from what we get from God, thru *others*. And, what we get from God thru others, is the result of what we *give* to God, thru others.

Therein lies the secret of true Spiritual Giving. The way to increase what we *get* from God thru others, is to increase what we *give* to God thru others.

"No gift is truly given until it is given back to God," -Meister Eckhart

Charitable and Spiritual Giving

Another area of misunderstanding that often arises, is the failure to distinguish between '*charitable giving,*' and true Spiritual Giving.

Charitable giving is an activity of our soul that is rooted in compassion, and based upon the *needs* of others. The word *compassion* literally means to '*suffer together.*' Consequently, when we see other people '*in need,*' we feel their suffering, and are moved to alleviate their suffering by *giving* them whatever assistance we can. This is a good thing for us to do.

However, true Spiritual Giving is an activity of our Spirit, that is rooted in Joy, and is based upon our Love for others. In this case, we are *giving* for the pure Joy of giving, as a gesture of Love, which we experience as Gratitude. Therefore, we could say that Spiritual Giving is '*Gracious Giving,*' which is giving in a mood of gratitude.

In essence, '*charitable giving*' is a gift of compassion, and '*Spiritual Giving*' is an offering of appreciation.

"If the only prayer you ever said was 'Thank You!' that would be sufficient." -Meister Eckhart

Forms of Spiritual Giving

There are basically two forms of Spiritual Giving that we can choose to engage in. These are: 1) the giving of Tithes; and 2) the giving of Offerings.

The ritualistic practice of Tithing is the giving of ten percent (10%) of our income to the sources of spiritual inspiration in our lives. In other words, we give 10% of our income to God, thru the people and places for whom we feel grateful.

An 'Appreciation Offering' is simply a gift of any amount that is given to God, thru the people and places for whom we feel gratitude.

The underlying Principle that becomes active in our lives through the practice of Tithing and the giving of Offerings is the 'Law of Gratitude,' which states:

Whatever we are Grateful for, will increase.

It is important to realize that when we Tithe, the Law of Gratitude will produce a 'tenfold return' on our giving. However, when we make an Appreciation Offering over and above our Tithe, this same Law can produce up to a 'hundredfold return' on our giving. Consequently, the more that we can give to God thru others, in a mood of deep Gratitude, the more prosperous our lives will be.

Where we give to is not nearly as important as the mood in which we give. Whenever we perform an act of Gratitude in the face of fear, our faith is deepened in a way that will produce some greater good in our lives. Consequently, any time that we give anything to anyone, it can be turned into a form of Spiritual Giving by simply being grateful to God for what we have received thru that individual or organization.

The Enemy of Spiritual Giving

It is written that, "All things work together for the good of those who love God," and

Spiritual Giving is the way that we demonstrate our love for God. Furthermore, prosperous conditions are the way that the Divine reveals Itself in the lives of those who love God. Consequently, through Spiritual Giving we are able to bring Heaven to Earth in our experience of life.

However, just as fear is the enemy of Love, it is also the enemy of Spiritual Giving. Furthermore, the spirit of fear is cunning, and will use the appearance of lack in our lives to activate itself within us. Unfortunately, we seldom recognize this fear, for it cloaks itself in a veil of desire to 'get more money, and other things.'

All of this arises out of a universal *error belief* in lack. However, we have the ability to draw our deeply repressed fear of lack to the surface, and then release it through the practice of Spiritual Giving.

Whenever we intend to make a spiritual gift in the midst of impoverished conditions, our fear of lack will arise in the form of a 'universal doubt,' which says, "I don't have enough..." Fortunately, it is written that "perfect love casts out all fear," and perfect love is Gratitude. Therefore, the Gratitude that accompanies our Spiritual Giving will cast out the fear of lack from the flesh of our being.

However, because our fear of lack arises out of a 'universal belief' that is shared with much of humanity, it may take many occasions of Spiritual Giving to eliminate it completely from our being. This is why an ongoing practice of Spiritual Giving is so necessary. However, since this practice is inherently a joyous activity, there should be no reason not to engage in giving as often as we can.

A Vow of Prosperity

One of the most misunderstood of all traditional spiritual practices is the dreaded

'*Vow of Poverty.*' Down through the ages, many well meaning souls have chosen to live impoverished lives on the basis of a '*false notion*' that there is some noble spiritual advantage to being poor.

However, if we examine the life of the Buddha, we will see that he dispelled this myth over 2,500 years ago by living as an impoverished ascetic. It turned out to be a lifestyle that provided no particular spiritual advantage. However, out of his experience he came to realize that our own true nature is revealed by embracing the '*Royal Middle Way.*' This is the path of prosperous living that lies between the two extremes of decadent self-indulgence and impoverished self-denial.

Jesus reconfirmed the Buddha's realization by cursing the fig tree that bore no fruit. In other words, it is the Will of God for us to feed each other with the fruit of our giving. "*If you love me, then feed my sheep,*" were the final words of Jesus to Simon Peter. In this light, we could say that it is good for us to be prospered in doing the work of the Lord, which is Love.

In truth, a '*vow of poverty*' is a test of faith, to see if we can live a *prosperous* life by giving away all of what we receive. The key to passing this test is to correctly understand and practice the unselfish art of Spiritual Giving.

As a practical matter, there are very few among us who have the faith to even take this test, let alone pass it. However, every one of us has the ability to start from where we are, and to begin to build our faith in God as our source. We can do this by practicing the Principle of Spiritual Giving on a regular and ongoing basis, in ever increasing amounts. In this way, every time we engage in the practice of Spiritual Giving, we are releasing our belief in lack, and taking a '*Vow of Prosperity.*'

In Conclusion

It is a human tendency to look for our good where we hope it will be easy to find. However, our good always lies on the other side of our fear. Consequently, the courageous practice of Spiritual Giving is the means by which we conquer our fear of lack, and thereby reveal the fulfillment of the many Promises of God concerning prosperity and abundance for our lives.

The thief (of fear) comes to steal (my good), and to kill (my inspiration), and to destroy (my dreams). I Am (the Divinity within me that has) come that I might have life and have it more abundantly.

John 10:10



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