

*To Give
Is
God-Like*



*For
He Gave*

Harold (Rusty) Russwurm

Front Cover

INTRODUCTION

Harold (Rusty) Russwurm served as an elder in the Sunset Church of Christ, Lubbock, Texas, for a number of years. He counseled with and taught people the word of God regularly and constantly. People believed in him, were persuaded by his life and readily followed his leading and example.

A long time gospel preacher who served with him as a fellow elder for years recently said of him publicly: "I have never known a better elder in all the years of my preaching." That was a great tribute. I say these things not simply as a commendation of a bother, for it is not human applause or acclaim that he seeks, but to encourage those who read this little book on giving to listen carefully to what he advises a Christian to do about the grace of giving.

From, reading this this tract, you will be able to determine that Brother Russwurm has been there, so to speak. He has, himself, experienced growth in this area of service and devotion to God; and, in turn, he is beseeching Christians everywhere to grow up to that point God wants them be in this stage of their lives.

What he says makes sense. It is practical, and above that, it is Biblical. The writer of the Hebrew letter recommends, or, may I say, mandates that Christians believe in and be persuaded by those elders that are leading them—who are walking out ahead of them. You will be blessed to listen to this godly elder in his teaching on this most important subject and then put into practice what God requires of you.

Guy Caskey

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TO GIVE IS GOD-LIKE, FOR HE GAVE

There is nothing significant to the title to this tract except to encourage you to go to the Bible to research for yourself and

determine how many times it is recorded, both in the Old and New Testaments, what God has given to man.

From this review you will readily become aware that our God is a giving God. He began His giving at creation and has continued it throughout all of the ages. Therefore, if we are to be like God, we must also be a giving people. We have, in all probability, neglected to teach both publicly and privately on this subject more than any other in God's Word.

The scripture contains much information, many examples and numerous commands regarding this subject, which is viewed by many as being unpopular. Could it be that we are trying to please men by teaching only what they want to hear? This book is not intended in any way to present a detailed study of our use of the money with which we have been entrusted, but is presented with the hope that it will stimulate all of us to do the following:

1. See God as one that has given and continues to give.
2. Take up the Bible and seriously study it as it relates to giving.
3. That it will cause you to spend some time in prayer to God regarding your stewardship.
4. Encourage you to carefully review your giving to see if you are giving in light of the teachings of the Bible and that it is measuring up to expectations found therein.
5. Create a desire within you to set goals to grow in the grace of giving.
6. Have you reflect on the example of liberal givers in the Bible as well as cause you to consider some examples of Christians today that are liberal in their use of material wealth. There are a number of brothers and sisters that have grown to the point that they are currently giving a high percentage of their gross income. Many of these have a very low income or few worldly possessions, yet they give liberally of what they have. These men and women give because of their love for the Lord and for the lost souls of

men, women, and children located in places where the gospel must be sent. I have known several people who have been good

examples to me, and I have chosen to share some of these with you. I feel sure that you know others that have been personal examples.

All of us have more than likely heard public proclaimers, preachers and teachers, of our day make statements about the fact that they have been at a certain congregation for several years and have only preached or taught on giving one or two times a year. They usually do it around budget time, and then, at the request of the church leaders. In view of the number of times that stewardship is mentioned in the Bible, this should be taught by preachers and teachers throughout the year and not only at the time of planning a budget or at a crisis of finances.

Covetousness Condemned

In Ephesians 5:5, we learn that a covetous man will not inherit the kingdom of God. You and I are seeking salvation, therefore, we do not want to neglect to be the type of steward that God expects of us.

In Luke 12:15, we are told to “take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” For many of us in our affluence, with so much emphasis being placed on materialism, it becomes very difficult not to value a man by his possessions. This is why you and I need to carefully review the importance we place on things in our daily lives.

Godly Use of Possessions

At times it is easy for us to look at others that have more than we possess materially and say, “If I had what they possess, just think what I could do for the Lord.” But the important question is, “What are you doing now with what you have?”

Let us consider Mark 12:42–44 as we weight the use of our material wealth. The poor widow cast in all that she had, “her whole livelihood.” This means that she gave up something more than that which was left over—in fact, there was nothing left, as she gave it all.

Today it has become a fairly common practice to take care of all of our needs and wants before giving to God. Do you think this is acceptable to God? What was his reaction in the Old Testament when the first and best was not given to Him? Since God does not change, it would have to be our conclusion that His acceptability today would be the same as it was at that time.

The Godhead Is Aware Of Our Giving

Do you think that God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are seeing "how the people put money into the treasury" (Mark 12:14)?

At one time I had the opportunity to serve with a godly elder who continues to have an impact upon my thinking on giving. We were in a meeting, and one of the matters that came up for consideration was a request for a special collection. After some discussion, the elder, knowing that this was a cause that needed to be funded, stated that he moved that we allow the collection to be taken. He further stated that, if a plate was passed for a needed work and he had no money, he would tear a button off of his clothing and drop it into the plate in order to be able to give something. For several years after this, I had an opportunity to be aware of the contributions, and never did we find a button in any contribution.

It is my conviction that God makes provisions for those that give to His causes. Maybe more of us should exemplify the attitude this elder had, and, if so, no doubt more works would be adequately funded. We would see in our brotherhood less funds spent on hired fund raisers that have specialized in this art. More money would be available to spend on keeping the saved secure in the Lord, teaching the lost, and caring for the needy.

Christian Examples In Our Age

During my years as a Christian, it has been my privilege to hear a number of excellent motivating speakers on giving. A number of them have had a positive influence on my thinking and attitude about giving. The first time was when I heard Brother Parker Henderson tell about the Hi-C can and how it had been used by a Christian couple in Tennessee. At the close of each day they put their change in a can, and, when vacation came around, they would take the money to use on a trip.

Brother Henderson was in the area raising funds and these good Christians could see the need he had presented and, instead of going on vacation, they gave the money saved in the Hi-C can to be used in the work of the Lord.

The couple's example has been used many, many times at gatherings of religious people and today is still being effectively used. They did not give to be an example, but they gave because of their love for the Lord and consequently the love of lost souls of people all around the world.

I am glad that records are kept on many events such as the above, since it allows us to think positively about all of the funds that have been gathered and used because of someone being willing to show us how. Aren't you happy that others have shown us the way? Would you like to be an example for someone else? Well, think for just a minute. You are an example to many that you are not even aware of, and I am sure that many have told you of the influence you have had on them.

About fifteen years ago, my wife and I were visiting a congregation that was taking a special collection for mission work. After the sermon, a Christian man got to tell of a personal experience he had had on giving to this special need. When it was announced that there would be a special collection taken in the congregation, he was anxious to be able to give and began to pray and look for a way to help. He was a mechanic and had worked for a number of years at the same shop. The owner came to him and asked him to do some overtime work. He readily accepted and then was told that the pay would be doubled. His prayers had been answered as to how he could help with the special collection. He gave all of his overtime money to the Lord and he was very happy to be able to help others. I have never met this man, but you can be assured that he has had a lasting impact upon me for what he did.

Maybe a lesson that I, along with many others, need to learn is that to be truly happy in our service to God, we must be willing to give and look for ways to give. How long has it been since you looked for a way to give to a cause or to an individual in need? You may have been robbing yourself of a real joy. It also may be that you have robbed God by not helping as the opportunity occurred.

In Matthew 6:33, we are exhorted to put the kingdom first and God will provide for our daily needs. It may be in the form of a job, a raise, a gift, or some other means He may choose. Also, read Matthew 25:31–46, and take some time to meditate on this reading to see what we can expect in judgment.

Doesn't it appear that to be acceptable to God in judgment we are to use the things with which we have been blessed? Let's pray, plan, and use what we have to the glory of God by using it to help others in their needs. Since judgment is an individual matter, then the use of our blessings will either be counted for or against us in the final event. At that time it will be too late to make a decision as to how we will minister to others. When we are aware of someone with a need, of which we have the means to fulfill, do you think God will be more pleased if we meet that need or turn the need over to a benevolent committee? We are provided daily with the opportunity to give to God by giving to others. Let me issue a challenge to you in helping someone.

I know of a Christian couple that when they learn of a need of some Christian or Christian family they find a way to help take care of their need without the individual knowing from whom the help came. This has been a most gratifying experience for them. Can you imagine how you feel to be able to supply medicine or pay a doctor's bill for a child, husband, wife, or grandchild or some other family member.

Why not plan today on doing just this? Others have been given money by this couple, and when they would indicate that they wanted to pay them back, the response was "find someone else in need of help" or "just drop it in the collection to be used for the Lord's work." If more of us did this, maybe this would begin to spread with those having received help; then becoming the helper. Would you accept a challenge today and seek out and find someone and then help them? It is hoped that we can rise above the thinking that once we have given into the treasury of the local congregation that we have fulfilled all of our giving.

A number of years ago I was visiting with a deacon of the congregation where I worshiped. He and I were discussing giving in general and his giving in particular. He advised me that

he had set a goal of giving thirty-three percent of his gross income to the Lord and wanted me to know that he was now approaching the goal that he had set. He was married and had a large family to support. I believe he has reached that goal and has probably set a higher goal by now. He did not give because of a budget, but gave because he loved God and the lost souls of the world. He did not do this to be an example, but became one to those that were aware of his giving. He only wanted to be pleasing to God and was not looking for the praise of men. This generous example has caused me to rethink my giving.

These examples, along with the study of God's Word, are presented in the hope that they will be an encouragement to you to reassess your giving. It is my opinion that the motivations we use many times do not have a lasting impact upon our willingness to continue what we have begun. We hear a great deal about budgets, programs, etc., that have little to do with the building up of the body or reaching out to the lost and are asked repeatedly to base our giving upon such appeals. The stronger teachings that motivate us are love, commitment, desire, and willingness. If we use these ways to motivate, they will prove to stimulate a lasting attitude. One can give time and again out of love, but will only give for a short period of time out of pressure or fear. We need to let the Word of God set the basis for our giving rather than the ways and thoughts of men.

Others Motivate

Church leaders need to realize there are many people in the congregation that are vitally interested in seeing that the needs of Christians are met and that the gospel is taught to the lost by whatever means are available, so long as it does not violate the teachings of God.

Leaders need to lead members of the congregation to a higher degree of giving with the proper challenge. This will include the proper example in their living, regular Biblical teaching on giving, and proper motivations to give. Once this is accomplished, most congregations will grow in their giving to a point that we would be amazed. Crisis giving would be discontinued, and special works or one time needs could become a challenge to the congregation, such as the food relief for Poland a few years ago.

A congregation will not grow in its giving until they are taught to be a liberal giver. One reason for a lack of giving today by Christians is that for too long a period of time very little teaching has taken place in most congregations on a regular basis using the Bible as the book of instructions. The time has come for a change in this area of our teachings if we are to meet the challenges of the future and prepare ourselves for judgment.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians gives us an excellent example of what those Christians in Macedonia did in their giving to the poor saints at Jerusalem (II Corinthians 8:1-15).

First of all we find them in great trial of affliction, not using this as an excuse to give, but giving regardless of the circumstances they were experiencing at the time of the need of others. We are told of their joy being in abundance even under deep poverty. These Christians were filled with joy because they were able to help someone who had a need. In our day and time, many would overlook such a group of Christians in our quest to help others. These churches were very poor with worldly goods but very rich in generosity when it came to sharing with others. You may ask how can one give beyond his ability and the answer is, we could not without the help of God.

Paul says that they gave not as he had hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord. When one has given himself or herself to the Lord, there is no doubt that they will begin to grow in the grace of giving. This means we make no reservations, do not hold back, make no plans without seeking God's guidance, and move out with faith trying to please our Maker.

The writer admonishes the Corinthians not only to have faith, knowledge, diligence, and practice love, but told them that they should abound in the grace of giving also. In II Corinthians 8:8, he tells them this is how we prove the sincerity of our love. When we read of the attributes of love in I Corinthians 13, we can readily understand how that love will cause us to give regardless of circumstances. This not only allows us to begin but to keep on giving, because of the great force love has to propel us forward to action. We might ask ourselves how this could have happened and what were the reasons for the

results of these brethren? The following are some suggestions as to why:

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1. First of all they planned to give. "... that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality ... but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have. For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have" (II Corinthians 8:1-12). Paul told the Corinthians to "perform the doing of it." Most of the time we do what we plan to do and usually do not get around to doing something that we have not made part of a definite plan or commitment. Today, if you and I will spend time in prayer and planning to give, I believe that this will prove to be a most important step toward our liberal giving.
2. They had learned of a need and, therefore, were willing to participate. Where there is a willingness coupled with a plan after time in prayer a way will be found to carry out this act. The wise man, Solomon, tells us, "for as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7); therefore we need to begin to think about liberal giving in order to become a liberal giver.
3. They asked to give. "Imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and fellowship of the ministering to the saints" (II Corinthians 8:4). Paul set out that they "entreated us to accept their gift." How long has it been since some individual or congregation has asked someone for the privilege of helping in a need?
4. I believe that someone has taught them to give either by example or by teaching; more than likely they had received both of these teachings on giving.

Is it any surprise to us that they gave out of their conditions after they had gone through the exercise of praying, planning, showing a willingness, asking to have a part, and having been taught? I believe that their preparation and their dependence upon God allowed them to give "even beyond their ability." Since Paul used these Christians as examples to the Corinthians, I am glad that the Holy Spirit included

this in the Holy Scriptures in order that you and I might also benefit from their example. Let us use their display of generosity to spur us to liberality.

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There are many other scriptures that you can use to help broaden your understanding of the biblical instructions for us to be liberal in our giving; for us to experience joy in the helping of others. It is my hope and prayer that this short book will be of help to you by way of encouragement to spend some time in a study of God's plan for giving. It is my belief that all of us as Christians want to be like God, and this being the situation, we should remember: To Give Is God-Like, For He Gave.

**You can give without
loving,
But you cannot love
without giving.**

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