

Give to Receive

Introduction

We are in a series called Paradox. A paradox is a statement or idea that at first seems to contradict itself. "Less is more" "the only constant is change" "Act Natural"

The Scriptures are full of paradox. God's truth is so different from the world's truth that almost everything God says and does is a paradox when compared to the teachings of our culture.

Jesus' teachings were radical. Often He taught in paradox. A paradox on first blush seems to be contradictory, but it invites you to consider more.

In this series, we have so far looked at "Experiencing Joyful Fear" "When you are weak then you are strong" "Joy in suffering"

Jesus taught others...."to gain your life you must lose it" "You live when you die to yourself"

But today we are going to look at the Paradox...That when it comes to God's blessings, You must give to receive.

Acts 20:35 (ESV) 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Note that we are to work hard...not just for ourselves, but so that we can help others who are weak. Jesus said we would be more blessed if we give....Giving to others releases the blessings of God.

In fact, Jesus said that the measure we use for others is the measure that we will receive

Luke 6:38 (ESV) 38 give, and it will be given to you. 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."

Talk about harvesting the crops.

"Bless" and "blessing" are important words in the believer's vocabulary, not only when we worship and pray, but also when we give. But what is a blessing?

Paul initially thought his thorn in the flesh was a painful burden, but it turned out to be just the blessing he needed

2 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV) 7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

Joseph was sure that his time of confinement in Egypt was a mistake, but he discovered that it fit right in with God's timetable when he became second ruler in the land

The apostle Peter opposed our Lord's going to the cross, but then he discovered that the cross was one of the greatest of all blessings God ever gave mankind.

So what is a blessing? Our definition? Things that we like and that benefit us....

God's Definition...

Anything our Lord is, says, or does that grows us in faith and helps us bring glory to God.

So you can see the problem. Often God allows things to happen in our lives that are blessings that we are not able to recognize in the moment. Often it is only when we look back on our lives that we can see what God was doing.

To know and share in God's character, God's word, and God's works is to be blessed, and to allow them to work in our lives and help others is to be blessed even more.

As we walk with the Lord, as we abide/ spend time in Him, we experience various stages of blessing; and to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord is to go from blessing to blessing. Often God's blessings are all around us, but the more we abide with Him, the more we see and experience them.

But blessings are not just for us...God doesn't usually bless you to bless you....He blesses you and me so that we can bless others.

God prepares us for what He has prepared for us. But we are not reservoirs; we are rivers—a flow of blessings from our Spirit, through us.... to bring the blessings of the Lord to others

We are going to look today at three aspects of the blessings of the Lord...

Receiving God's blessing, sharing God's blessing, and glorifying God because of the blessing.

Receiving the Blessings of God

Since the day of my birth, I have been surrounded by the multitude of the blessings the Lord has built into His marvelous creation. Each day I have sunlight to help me see and to help plants and people grow. I have air to breathe, food to eat, water to drink and to use for bathing, and a host of other useful gifts that enable me to enjoy life and get my work done

It's unfortunate that people made in God's image sometimes take these blessings for granted when we ought to be praising and thanking the Lord

Genesis 1:31 (ESV) 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

Psalms 136:1-3 (ESV) 19 Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!

This includes the remarkable body He designed for us. Read Psalm 139 and see what David thought of God's handiwork in the human body.

Psalm 139:13–15 (ESV) 13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

God "gives us richly all things to enjoy", and yet people repeatedly ignore the goodness of the Lord God, abuse their bodies, lay waste the environment, and continue damaging and destroying His world. Every day people live in the incredible blessings of God and completely ignore Him.

He gives them everything they need and they complain if they lack anything they want. We tend to think we own our possessions. We take pride in them. We think our value is based on what we have or where we live. We place our trust in our finances. Yet God teaches to not trust in our money.

1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV) 17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

1 Timothy 6:18–19 (ESV) 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

We are to be rich in good works. We are to be generous...ready to share...then we will be blessed and find the life God planned for us.

We are drowning in God's blessings and yet we take so much for granted.

We should look back and give thanks for our ancestors without whom we could never have arrived in this world. We should thank our parents for allowing us to live and not aborting us. We should thank God for all the faithful people who shared the message of Jesus until it reached us;

Looking back, I thank God for my teachers in church, the public schools, and universities, and for the librarians who helped to develop my love for books and reading. This is not an autobiography, so I won't go into detail, but a host of people played important roles in preparing me for adulthood and ministry, and I thank God for them

Another great blessing in my life are the mentors who invested in me...people who inspired me...people who challenged me...and those who believed in me. Those who patiently prayed for me....shared the truth with me...and patiently gave me time to respond.

God blessed me with incredible Grqandparents, Parents, Uncles, Aunts, Cousins, and siblings who have been huge in my life.

God has blessed me with an incredible wife...my life partner. She has made me so much better than I am. We have been blessed with three amazing children and God has allowed us to experience the joy of their spouses and now grandparenting.

God has given me great friends, an incredible church family, some amazing co workers and remarkable neighbors.

Yet none of that compares to the incredible blessing of knowing Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. And in my walk with Him He has blessed me with gifts, talents and fruits of the Spirit. And He has allowed me the honor of teaching His Word for over 25 years.

As Tammy and I look back, we see the hand of God everywhere, and we give thanks. Yes, it is a great blessing to receive the gifts of God that make life and eternal life and abundant life possible, but there is something even better.

Sharing the Blessings of God

One day as He was teaching, Jesus said...

Acts 20:35 (ESV) 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

It doesn't surprise me that Paul latched on to this statement, for if there was ever a man who knew how to give, it was Paul. He later wrote to the Ephesians,

Ephesians 4:28 (ESV) 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

There are three ways to get money: stealing it , earning it, or receiving it as a gift. Paul encourages us to work, not just to pay our bills but so that we may be able to give to others! Paul knew what he was talking about because he labored with his own hands to help support himself and his fellow workers

Acts 20:32–34 (ESV) 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.

Paul provided for his own needs and shared the rest with others. Too many believe they are to work to get possessions for themselves. They think they actually earned what they have on their own. Yet everything we earn comes from God.

James 1:16–17 (ESV) 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

God owns everything...He allows you and me to steward it for Him. However, too many become greedy and covet what others have. Jesus warns us

Luke 12:15 (ESV) 15 And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

God taught us through Paul, that to covet things is to make an idol of them.

Colossians 3:5–6 (ESV) 5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

Professed Christians who worship money, people, things, and themselves are as much idolaters as the people in the Bible who worshiped the false Canaanite god called Baal.

God has blessed many people with financial resources. Many are rich. Having money is not sinful...allowing money to have you is sinful. Using your money only for yourself is sinful. And the desire to have more can be sinful. It is not having money that is the problem. The problem is the pursuit of more to benefit yourself.

1 Timothy 6:9–10 (ESV) 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

When we covet we are doing at least two things that dishonor God. First, we are telling God that what He has already provided for us is not enough to satisfy us. Second, we turn to another God...Money....to provide for us what we believe God has failed to give us. When we make money our God....we become like that which we worship.

Psalms 115:1–12 (ESV) 1 Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness! 2 Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" 3 Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. 4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. 5 They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. 6 They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. 7 They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. 8 Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

Notice that the Psalmist tells us that we become like the things that we worship. God warns us that, spiritually speaking, idolaters become like the gods they worship—unable to speak, hear, see, smell, or move. When we worship anything other than God, we make that thing an idol and we become spiritually paralyzed.

Jesus warned us that this idolatry separates us from God and His truth.

Matthew 13:22 (ESV) 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Jesus drives the point home...

Matthew 6:24 (ESV) 24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

So we are warned of the dangers of idolatry particularly as it relates to the worship of money or possessions. At the same time through the Scriptures are full of commands to use the money God has given you to serve and help others.

Jesus pointed out that when we give to the poor, we are actually giving to Him!

Matthew 25:40 (ESV) 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

One reason why giving results in receiving is that giving makes us more like God and opens our hearts to receive more blessing to give to others

If God can get it through you...He will get it to you. When it comes to all the blessings God has given us, they don't really bless us until we give them away. You and I are to be rivers of blessings drowning those downstream with God's blessings and love....but too often we keep for ourselves what God intended for others. We put up a dam in the river of God's blessings....hoard them for ourselves and end up being damned.

The Lord knows He can trust His wealth to generous believers who give Him all the glory.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (ESV) 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Grace and greed simply will not dwell in the same heart.

The law of Moses commanded the people of Israel to give to the poor, and the believers in the New Testament churches followed their example and so should we

I have shared with all of you in the past that one of the major sins in my life prior to surrendering to Jesus was pride, greed and materialism.

Before I knew Jesus, I thought money could make me safe, secure and happy. I thought my life was all about me. I was empty inside and could not ever find peace and contentment. All I cared about was me and the few people that I loved.

I believed at one point in my life that I deserved what I had earned. I bought the lie that said I had done it all by myself. And I bought the bigger lie that all that I earned was for me and it was my decision what to spend it on. And I bought the biggest lie that money would make me happy and that my life was about me. No matter how much I had, I was never content...always wanting more. Money was my God. Pride was my motivation. And arrogance was the motor behind it all.

I am so ashamed that I failed to give God credit for all that He had given to me. It took me a long time to confess that sin and seek God's forgiveness. He taught me that the antidote to greed and worshiping money was to give generously to others and worship Jesus. That you only find true meaning in life when you live your life for others rather than yourself.

Over the years I have learned to give away even things that matter to me. The time God has given to me. The money God has given to me. And the blessings God has given to me. When it comes to my possessions, I don't give away leftovers...I give away things that I really enjoy but don't need. I learned from David to never give to God something that cost me nothing.

2 Samuel 24:24 (ESV) 24 But the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing."

God should not get our leftovers. God deserves the best of all we have. Our attention, our focus, our devotion, our time and our possessions. What we have is to be used for God, not for us. We should give to others things that are valuable to us.

For twenty years, on my birthday, I have always given away something that is really important to me. It has to be something that I really want to keep and almost feel like I need it. I give to others what cost me a lot. I have learned that as I become a river with the finances God has given me, He gives me more.. But more is not for me...All that God gives to me I try to find a way to bless others with it.

Systematic sacrificial giving sets us free from bondage to this passing world, It reminds us that every good thing we are, have, and do comes from God. Accumulating luxuries instead of majoring on necessities only multiplies our worries

Matthew 6:31–33 (ESV) 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all rich men, and so were David and Joseph of Arimathea; but they possessed the wealth, the wealth did not possess them. A dedicated Christian may have wealth and yet be free from the "money maladies" that plague people—pride, arrogance, worry, and selfishness.

I want to share something with you that I debated sharing. I believe that as your Pastor, I must be honest and open...while that includes all of my many shortcomings...it also includes areas of my life where I believe God has grown me.

God tells us to keep our giving to ourselves if our goal is to be seen by men.

Matthew 6:1–4 (ESV) 1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven....3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your

right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

So I think my heart is pure when I share with you a recent challenge God has given to Tammy and I. We have felt that it is time in our lives to give more to God. We have been directed to seriously downsize. We want to have more resources to invest here at Remnant and in other ministries. So we have felt led to sell our home and move into our RV. Our home is about 3400 sq feet and the RV is probably less than 300. We have accumulated a lot of things during our 23 years in that house.

Luke 12:48 (ESV) 48 Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

God has richly blessed us over the years. Everyone told us to go on FB marketplace and sell it all, but as we began to process what God wants us to do...we feel led to give it all way. God loves us and has blessed us with a lot of things we love and are grateful for....and now we want to give the things we love to those whom we love.

Our kids are here this week to tag what they need....many of our possessions have already been given away to those we know would be blessed by them. Some to the cafe...some to people. A lot has been donated to the church. In the next month we will have a free estate...not sale... but Estate Come and Get It. and I hope you will do so.

It has been an incredible joy to see the look on the faces of those God has allowed us to bless. For some it has opened up a discussion about the Gospel...why are you guys doing this? You mean I can just take it? God gave it to us...we enjoyed it...and now we are to give it to you to enjoy. It has always been His anyway and now He wants you to enjoy it.

We have learned in a very tangible way....it is better to give than to receive. This has been one of the most incredible Birthday's that I have ever had.

God has brought me full circle from materialism to simplicity. From living for me and now living for God.

2 Corinthians 9:7–8 (ESV) 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Even after all of our stuff is given away...we still know that God will provide for us all that we need. His grace will abound....and you can't hold both His grace and our greed in the same heart.

2 Corinthians 9:8–9 (ESV) 9 As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

When we cheerfully give to the Lord, we are actually making investments that pay rich dividends not only in this life but in our heavenly life to come in glory. That is our next topic.

So we receive the blessings of God...we share the blessings of God with others and then.....

We glorify God with our blessings

Our blessings from God are not for us. They are given to us to pass on to others and they are given to us to bring glory to God. Many people use the blessings of God to try and bring glory to themselves.

Whatever we give to the Lord, He has first given to us. We possess nothing that God doesn't own. I remember the day when my daughter realized that I had to buy all the presents for Christmas, Birthdays, etc...even the one's I gave myself or that they gave to me. It is the same with God. We have never possessed anything that is not His and was not given to us by Him. Everything we have was given to us by God to see what we would do with it. It is a test that reveals our hearts. King David revealed the same when he dedicated the temple.

1 Chronicles 29:14 (ESV) 14 "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

Jesus constantly taught of not being allured by your possessions.

Matthew 6:19–21 (ESV) 19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

If you really want to know where your heart is, page through your check book and see how much has been invested in the bank of heaven.

God gives to us and we in turn give back to Him as we give to others

Matthew 25:40 (ESV) 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Every time we use what God has entrusted us for the benefit of others we are worshiping God. Every time we hoard it we are worshiping ourselves. When we receive a blessing from God our first question should be...God who is this for? Sometimes God reveals that it is for you and other times He reveals that He will show you who to pass it on to. We are stewards of all that God give us. Entrusted to distribute His blessings as He directs.

When we use the blessings of God for God, something changes in our heart. We are drawn into His purposes, His plan and His agenda. We experience Him more intimately. Our heart aligns with His. We begin to understand His heart for others. Jesus taught that where our money goes there our heart will go. Invest in God's agenda and watch your heart pursue Him.

Hoarding what God intended for others is one of the ways that we break our intimacy with God. It is in a way stealing from God. When we keep our tithes, keep what could bless others, hoard what was entrusted to us...it is an unconfessed sin.

Malachi 3:7–10 (ESV) 7 Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?' 8 Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

Blessings are given to us the test our heart. When we are faithful He gives us more.

Matthew 25:21 (ESV) 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

It is more blessed to give than to receive because giving is an act of faith, we trust that we can't outgive God. No matter how much we give to others, God will meet our needs.

If we give only to receive and not to be a blessing to others to the glory of God, then our motives are not godly

Yes, there are rewards on earth today for God's faithful people, but there will also be rewards in heaven.

The key to a joyful life now and a blessed future in heaven is faithfulness...Faithfulness means that you have done what God wants with all that He has entrusted to you. It is our faithfulness that God will reward in Heaven. God has given us our life...the truth of His Word...the revelation of the Gospel Message...The Holy Spirit....The fruit of that Spirit....our God-given talents and gifts...and yes possessions and money.

Faithfulness is using all that He has given you to bring glory to God and not to ourselves. Many people who our world considers successful on earth today will discover, when they die and meet Jesus, that they are now an outcast without a home and their money will not be able to help them.

Matthew 16:26 (ESV) 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

We are living in a world that rejects God's Son and God's truth and opposes God's people, and we must be faithful. The more we give now of ourselves, our time, and our possessions, the more we will receive now and for all eternity.

On the day when I finally get to see Jesus....I want to hear Him tell me and all of us....

Matthew 25:23 (ESV) 23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

Jesus taught that you must give to receive. It is a paradox and in it is one of the secrets of life. We are to give our time, our talent and our treasure to others and in doing we find what everyone is desperately searching for...true contentment and peace, but it only comes from

Paradox Week 4 Give to Receive
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surrendering to Jesus and living your life for others.....Give to receive? Makes total sense .
Let's pray.