

The Gift Of Receiving

There are many ways to categorize and look at people. One way is to label people as either givers or takers. Some [the givers] feel almost a compulsive need to give, and find it very difficult to receive help from others. Yet for others [the takers], they feel life owes them, that they are of such importance that, “Of course the world owes me.”

While all of us have a bit of each, the giver and the taker, I want to address those of you who are primarily givers.—You find it difficult to be on the receiving end. Question: “What happens when you can no longer give?”—Maybe you have been injured, or you have a terminal illness, and, as much as you’d like to be up doing and giving to others, you simply can’t.—If this is where you are, then I have some important things to share with you.

While this may come as a blow to your pride, do you realize that receiving can also be a form of giving? Were you to look back over the years of your life, I bet there have been many people who wanted to give to you, but you, being the giver you are, found it hard to take or receive from them.—True? Well, now is your opportunity to allow them to give to you, especially those to whom you have given so much. You can now give them the gift of giving, by being willing to receive their love and help.

The apostle Paul in the New Testament wrote, “Bear one another’s burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ.” [Galatians 6:2]. This verse implies that bearing one another’s burdens is a two-way street.

Allow me to address two areas where it is imperative that you allow others to bear your burdens. The first is emotionally. People are not mind readers. How can they help you bear your emotional burdens—the fear, the discouragement, the feelings of helpless and hopelessness, the anger, the shame, the regrets, the guilt, the humiliation—unless you share those feelings?

Do you remember your mother or grandmother having an old pressure cooker with the lock-lid and the little pressure release valve on top? Emotions are a lot like that pressure cooker. You don’t want to wait until the cooker builds up so much pressure that it explodes and covers the walls, ceiling, and floors with food. Nor, do you want to pop the lid in an untimely fashion. Holding it all in, or popping the lid, are both dangerously poor ways of dealing with feelings. The ideal way is to let off the pressure a little bit at a time until the pressure inside is manageable.

What am I saying? Don’t hold your feelings in. Share them with others. According to the Bible, as you allow others to bear your burdens, you are fulfilling the very law of Christ. Plus, how do you expect other to share their burdens with you if you never share your burdens with them? By sharing your burdens, you give them permission to share with you.

Where and how do you start? What do you say?—How ‘bout saying, “Do you have a minute?

There are some things I've been feeling, and I just need a friend to listen. I'm not looking for advice or answers. I know there are no easy answers. Will you let me share what's on my heart?"—Pick this person wisely. The last thing you want is to pick someone who'll say, "I'm sorry, but I don't have time." Which, translated, means: "I'm scared because I haven't dealt with my own burdens and I'm not strong enough to listen to yours."

There is a second area where you can allow others to give to you, and that is physically. Maybe you've come to the place where others are having to feed you, or, God forbid, change your depends [diapers]. How humiliating. On a feeling level, it can't get much worse than that. It is at this point that most givers lose it and become depressed. Why? Because behind most givers are the hidden feelings: "I must give in order to receive love." "I'm unworthy to receive others' love." I know—these are the feelings I've struggled with all my life.

But is that the law of Christ? No? Christ was both a giver and a receiver. Read the New Testament and notice how many times Jesus allowed others to give to Him: meals, free lodging, anointing His head with oil, washing His feet, and even carrying the cross which had become too burdensome for Him to carry.

My point? Jesus knows what you are going through, and He has modeled for you that it is ok to receive. And do you know what? His love for you doesn't change one bit. In fact, as you are able to begin receiving from others, with no way of paying them back; maybe, for the first time in your life, God's unconditional love will become real to you. It may finally sink in that you don't have to be a giver in order to receive God's love. His love is unconditional. It is free.

Are you disabled, unable to care for yourself? Is death staring you in the face? Maybe you are not only dealing with all of the emotional baggage that goes with facing death, but, for the first time in your life, you are forced to be a taker, and it is one of the most frightening, humiliating things you ever experienced.—Well, join the club. You are not alone.

As strange as it may sound, this may be one of the greatest gifts God has ever given to you. Am I saying that a slow death, or being handicapped, is a blessing in disguise? That is exactly what I am saying. And, before you write me as as crazy, please listen. According to the Bible, God's gift of salvation is never because we earn it or deserve it. It is not because we're givers that we receive His love. In fact, it is our pride, or fear, that keeps us from God. According to scripture, salvation is a gift.

Only the proud and foolish would ever think they could earn it. [Please read: John 1:12, 3:16; Romans 3:23; 5:8, and Ephesians 2:8,9.] One of the best places to begin is to be willing to receive your Heavenly Father's love. Don't let pride, the cardinal sin of all sins, stand in the way of your receiving God's, or other's, love. As you allow yourself to receive, you are better able to receive

the love of the One who was nailed to a Roman cross for you. In other words, as you allow yourself to receive, you begin to better understand and participate in the sufferings of Christ and His sacrificial love for you.

The issue is whether you will allow yourself to receive this love. God and others have gifts to give you, but you must give them the gift of giving to you, and that calls for humility. Do it for them? Yes, but more importantly, do it for yourself. Sometimes pride must die in order that the seeds of God's unconditional love can grow in our hearts. Now is your chance to let it grow.

If what I've said strikes home, then come to God with your burdens. Has your pride, or fear, kept you from receiving the gift of His love as expressed in His Son, Jesus Christ, who died for you? If you're struggled with how you're going to face the future, realize you don't have to face it alone. Jesus is willing to walk the dark valleys of your life with you, if you will allow Him. But, pride must go. You must be willing to humbly receive His gift of salvation.

If you have never done that, may I suggest the following prayer: "Dear Lord Jesus, I thank You for loving me. I am sorry for the ways that I have sinned against You. I'm sorry for the pride that has kept me from receiving Your unconditional love and salvation. I believe You died on the cross, and rose again, to pay for my sin. As best as I know how, right now, I invite You to come into my life. Please forgive me, and cleanse me from all my sin. Calm my fears, and open my heart to receive your love. Grant me the humility to receive other's love. If ever I've needed you, I need you now. Grant me the assurance of eternal life, that, when I die, I know I will go to be with You. By faith, I thank You for hearing this prayer. Amen."

—May His peace be yours!