

## GIVE!

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**Luke 6:37-38**

Every now and then we run across a word in the Bible that when put into practice will literally rock your world. This word is a simple, on-time, four-letter word. It is not like some of the four-letter words that we know. It is a word that can be repeated in anyone's company. You should teach this word to your children as soon as they can understand it. It is a verb, not a noun, whose subject is understood. When you put this word into practice, you will discover that you have hooked into a cycle of possibilities that will open up the windows of Heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not be able to contain it. This word is like some other four letter words familiar to us all. One of those words is the word pray. When we pray, we link up with heaven and anything that stands in your way can be handled in an instant. When we pray, we take authority over circumstances. When we pray, lives are changed. When we pray, broken homes are put back together again and the impossible becomes possible when we pray. You don't understand the power of your prayers. You do not understand the power that becomes available when you say, "Thy kingdom come thy will be done."

Love is another four-letter word. Love is not real until it is put into practice. If you want to make a difference in the world, you will put the word love into practice. However, the word I want to focus on today is the word, Give. We meet this word most memorably in Luke 6:38.

In Luke's version of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we find Jesus giving practical keys to how we are to relate to the people in our lives. His basic premise is this: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If you want mercy, this text suggests to us that you have to be willing to show some mercy. You have to be able to hold your peace. Jesus, the master teacher, is giving us one of the immutable laws of the universe. God is gracious and generous. God has given us everything we need for life and living. The property you hold title to originally belonged to God. Ps. 24 But God has given it to us to manage for His glory and our good. John 3:16, 2 Pet 1:3. God has blessed us.

James 1:17 states that every good and perfect gift comes from above...From the Father of heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows. James is making the point that God is consistent in his giving. He doesn't give just when he feels like it. God gives us what we do not deserve. If you had to qualify for God's goodness and grace where do you think you would be today?

When Jesus came to earth, the people were always clamoring to him for attention and he always met the need. Do you see of any instance where Jesus turned anyone down? He gave of himself continually without counting the cost. Now he expects us to do as he has done. It's called sacrificial giving.

When Jesus gave the command to give, it was out of his nature and his example. You cannot tell anyone to do what you are not doing. This word is a timely and relevant word for us because it is designed to save us from ourselves. All of us are engaged in the endless cycle of gathering resources. We need to be careful of the unhealthy emphasis that we place on material things. We are so busy holding onto what we have that our hands are closed. The Dead Sea in the Holy Land has many tributaries feeding into it, but it does not feed into another body of water so it is so concentrated with salt and other minerals that nothing can live in it. We become dead when we continuously hoard and take, but never give to anyone or anything. Jesus is making clear that if you want to gain you must give. If you want to live the abundant life, you must be willing to give your life. Mat 16:24. A life that is lived to the fullest is a life that is always giving itself to others.

Jesus begins with a personal imperative. Jesus did not say, "Please give." He said, "Give"! It is also personally inclusive. In the Greek, the word give is plural so that we understand that when he gave the command it included everyone. No one can say, "I have nothing to give." God expects us to be as generous in our giving as He has been to us. Jesus gave until it hurt. That is sacrificial. If it is comfortable for you to write that check, it is not sacrificial. The word was also personally continuous; give and keep on giving.

God wants his love in circulation so that others don't feel unloved. Brothers in shelters and jails need other men to counsel them and provide them with positive examples. Older adults need someone to visit with them. If those of us who have would begin sharing generously, there would be no more hunger and homelessness. We are our brother and sister's keeper. We have to stop being so concerned with taking care of our own needs, and help our brothers and sisters. Where do you begin? Begin where you have a need. If you are feeling friendless, become a friend. If you need encouragement, encourage somebody else. If you have a need, plant a seed today.

Some of you think that you don't have enough to be able to give sacrificially and generously. The moment you step out on the word and put it into practice, God will provide the resources. Jesus told a man with a shriveled hand to stretch out his hand. The man did not argue with Jesus. He stretched out his hand and immediately it was restored. When God asks you to do something, the moment you do exactly what he said, it will be restored because that is the nature of God's word. Mat 12:13

I promise you that if you do what God says concerning whatever you lack, immediately God will begin to move in your situation. It works by faith: taking God at his word.

Trust God!

Peace.

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