

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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God's Giving Equation

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George Muller was a Christian with extraordinary faith in God. He ministered to orphans in Bristol, England during the 19th century. In his autobiography he recounts a multitude of instances where God supplied funds for the orphanage as Christians dedicated themselves to prayer.

Read his journal entry recorded May 26, 1851: "The Christian should never worry about tomorrow or give sparingly because of a possible future need. Only the present moment is ours to serve the Lord, and tomorrow may never come. Money is really worth no more than as it can be used to accomplish the Lord's work. Life is worth as much as it is spent for the Lord's service."¹

Is Muller correct? Should we hold back a portion of what we could give so that we can meet tomorrow's needs? The Apostle Paul had an opinion on this subject. Not surprisingly, God's equation for giving is different from ours.

When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, the church in Judea was in need of resources. Some churches had voluntarily given to help their Christian brothers (1 Cor. 8:1). The Corinthian believers expressed a desire to help but were not following through. Based upon Paul's encouragement to them, they may have thought that giving would produce a hardship for them.

"For (your giving) is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality – at this present time your abundance being a supply for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want, that there may be equality" (1 Cor. 8:13-14).

It only makes sense to us that our giving helps others in need. However, we easily succumb to the thinking that giving is a zero-sum game. When we give, we give up what we had, and someone else gets it. Thus, we end up partially losing. But our charitable giving not only helps others, it helps us. We think of giving as being mono-directional: from us to someone else, and then the activity stops. However, God views giving as bi-directional: from us to someone else, and then from others to us when we have needs. God does not simply like giving, He promises to bless giving.

How would we express giving in a mathematical equation? It is easy to express giving as follows:

- What I can give = everything I have, less what I really like

How would Paul express God's giving equation from this passage?

- What I can give = everything I have

Is George Muller's giving philosophy radical? Did the Apostle Paul misunderstand God's giving equation? Study 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 to find the answer. I do know one thing. When we give abundantly, God makes sure that we receive abundantly. God blesses us through others. Thus, we must give to help others and be willing to humble ourselves and let others give to us.

Will you choose to use God's giving math or your own?

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¹ The Autobiography of George Muller. Whitaker House Publishing, 1984, pp212.