

# life groups discussion guide

## money: god or gift – invest & give



*“Generosity consists not of the sum given, but the manner in which it is bestowed”*

— Mahatma Gandhi

*“Let us try to teach generosity and altruism, because we are born selfish”*

— Richard Dawkins

I found it interesting that when looking for quotes about generosity to include above, that I found several from some prominent non-Christians (Dawkins being one of the most hateful atheists you’ll find), lest we think that as Christians, that we have the best handle on the generosity thing.

I would argue, however, that the reasons behind the generosity are vastly different depending on your worldview. For Gandhi, it might be the key to a higher plane of spiritual existence. For Dawkins, perhaps he is simply troubled by the imbalance between those who have so much and hoard it and the poor who desperately need help – or maybe it just makes him feel better.

In both cases – and maybe all cases – it can be argued that the one being generous ends up with a reward or blessing of some sort as a result of their giving.

Q :: Look at the quote from Gandhi. Do you agree with his statement? Explain your answer.

Q :: What do we know about giving from Scripture in terms of “the manner in which it is bestowed”?

Q :: Look at the quote from Dawkins. Is he right?

As an atheist, how do you think Dawkins might suggest we teach generosity and altruism? By what standard do you define generosity – especially as it relates to the inherent nature of the selfishness of man?

Q :: What rewards do you think that Christians and non-Christians alike reap from being generous?

Since we’re talking about rewards, let’s look at what the Bible says about them. It can be easy for a Christian to believe that focusing on rewards is proving Dawkins’ premise that we are indeed inherently selfish from birth (of course, we recognize this is God’s premise, and that Dawkins’ is merely agreeing with it).

But is it wrong to keep an eye fixed on a reward? We certainly see Jesus using reward as a teaching tool in Luke 6. In verses 20-26 He gives what are referred to as “blessings and woes”, which are separated by a single verse in which Jesus adds some additional thought to the last blessing (because it seems like not much of a blessed situation). Jesus says in v. 20-22 that you are blessed if you are poor; hungry; weeping; and hated, excluded, insulted, rejected and considered evil because of Him. He then interjects: “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because **great is your reward in heaven**. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets”.

The in verse 35, Jesus says “But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. **Then your reward will be great**, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”

Just a couple verses later we come to one of the more well-known comments Jesus made about getting back

when we give when He said in 37-38: “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. *Give, and it will be given to you.* A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

We are even told in Hebrews 11:6 that one of the two conditions of coming to Jesus is that we must believe that He is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him.

Q :: Given these examples (and I’m sure there are more), why is the church so reluctant to talk about the rewards for generosity?

Q :: I love this quote from John Piper from the book *Money: God or Gift?*: “What could God give us to enjoy that would prove Him most loving? There is only one possible answer: Himself!...He alone can satisfy the heart’s longing to be happy.” So (follow me here), if the measure by which we are rewarded from God is the same one that we have used in our own giving, does it not stand to reason that a means of measuring the motive might be to just take a look at what we received back? Here’s what I mean: If I give with the sole intention of gaining more of God, then more intimacy will be the measure used to give back to me. If I give with the intention of feeling good about myself, then that becomes the measure of what I receive back. Make sense? Agree with the logic behind this idea?

Q :: Munson writes: “When the Christian gives to gain more of God, everybody wins.” Agree? Explain.

Read Luke 12:32-34

Q :: Jesus does something very interesting here. At the tail end of a discourse on why we should not worry or be unduly concerned about the things of this world that we need, He hits us with the first part of v. 33 and tells us to “Sell your possessions and give to the poor.” Would not selling our possessions and giving to the poor cause MORE worry from us and not less? What is Jesus after in these verses?

Q :: The book also points out that there are three aspects to biblical giving: cheerful, sacrificial, or regular. Which one of these is most difficult for you? And why?

Q :: And do you think it’s important for us to demonstrate all three of these aspects? Why?

Generosity, like thankfulness, can be cultivated through a commitment to it and practice of it. And perhaps our struggle in the area of generosity is not in the financial realm. God doesn’t desire us to be only generous with our cash, but with our time, talent and other treasure as well. Munson writes: “Jesus says we can gain treasure in Heaven by giving our time, energy, money, and skills to seek the Kingdom of God.” The idea that we are all blessed to be a blessing to others is by no means limited to the financial realm.

Q :: Is there another area outside of finances where you recognize a need to be more generous? What do you think hinders you in this area?

Q :: On page 92 of the book, Munson offers some ideas for what can be called “random acts of generosity”. Can you think of some way that you can be generous this week – even in some small way, remembering that it’s not the size of the gift, but the heart with which it’s given?

The idea is not necessarily one of “how can I give more money away”, but maybe one of “how can I live a life marked by regular, sacrificial and cheerful generosity with whatever God has entrusted to me.”



