

Eric  
Butterworth  
Speaks

Essay #5  
THE ART OF RECEIVING

We are told, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This is a clear articulation of a very fundamental law. Man must learn to give, to create, to express, to invest his life in some way because life is an unfoldment. Many a life is lived out in frustration due to fear and a sense of inadequacy which keeps itself all bottled up. Think give and you will get. Think of your life as a channel for the expression of wisdom and love, life, creativity, and get busy giving yourself away. It is a vitally important centrality of life.

However, there is another side of this law that we may overlook. In back of every giving must be a receiving. The faucet is giving when it is turned on, but before it can flow with water there must be an open pipeline to a source. We live in an opulent universe. The prodigality of nature is revealed in the beauty of flowers and in the abundance of harvest time, and in the tremendous energy flowing through Niagra Falls. But in this last example, although the energy is limitless, we can have only as much electrical energy as we can receive through the great generators. This receivership quality can be tested in a very human way. Suppose someone gives you a gift or does something special for you. Do you accept it graciously? Or do you protest that you are not worthy, that he really shouldn't do it, or perhaps do you hasten to repay it?

It is this inability to be a gracious receiver that is indicative of a spiritual problem that would no doubt answer the question about many other phases of life such as "Why can't I get ahead?" or "Why do these troubles always come to me?" Lack of grace in receiving is simply a form of selfishness. It is related to fear. To receive is to give someone else the change to give. It is a kind of giving sometimes neglected. We say, "But, I don't want to be under obligation." Usually, that obligation so feared is merely a thing of our own consciousness, a result of a feeling of unworthiness, poor self-image, and the unthinking refusal to allow anyone else to be included in the giving process.

How ridiculous is the subtle struggle among people to get even in the matter of giving. I invite you over, you must shortly invite me back. I do something nice for you, and you are terrible unhappy until you can in some way repay me. I receive a greeting card from you and must immediately rush out and purchase the card to be mailed to you, even if it had not occurred to me to do it before. When we rush to do these things, it is important that we perceive it as a rejection of the gift or gesture. We are denying the other person the opportunity of demonstrating through giving. Early in life I learned this lesson from my mother. When there was some hesitancy about accepting a gift, she always used to say, "Don't cut off your good."

How often we pray for help in some way; then, when someone offers to help us we object strenuously, "Oh, I couldn't let you do that." How on earth do we suppose that which we seek is to come, through some deus ex machina? God works through human hands. All gifts come from the creative source. Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights. God is the great giver, and He is the gift itself. So, when our good comes, we must learn to give thanks to God as the source, and then to bless the channels through which it has come. We must thereby allow the other person, the giver, to be a channel so that he can get in tune with the affluence, the flow, the substance, which will bless his life through his giving. Under divine law, when I have a need to receive, someone else has a need to give. So, even as I may have been blessed with the answer to prayer when someone offers me something, he is getting the answer to prayer in this subconscious motivation to give. If I were to refuse to accept the gift or even if I were to accept it grudgingly with a sense of personal obligation, with an attempt to immediately reciprocate, I cut off my good, and I cut off the other's good too.

Inherent in the law of "Give and ye shall receive," there is a hazardous trap. When we come to know the joy and the fulfillment in giving, quite often we make a

hobby out of giving because of the good we experience. So, we give not to fulfill the law, rather to receive the joy of giving. This is fine, but it can be selfish. It can even be counter to the rights and needs of others, a form of abuse of their intentions. An example is the person who always insists on grabbing the check. The inference is that he has plenty of money, and it is nothing to him, but this can lead to a genuine problem with his consciousness and adversely affect his relationships. Those to whom he is so generous start to feel uncomfortable and vaguely restricted with him.

One of the truly best forms of giving is at least sometimes to let the others do the giving. We may, in order to do this, have to cooperate by being willing to eat in a less expensive place or engage in recreation of a far more modest sort than we would prefer. However, otherwise we will hold the person in bondage to the feeling that he does not have enough, that he cannot keep up with us, and that we need at all times to do things for him. If you have been having difficulties helping someone, be it a loved one, a neighbor, a friend, a co-worker, one important thing may have been overlooked--let him do something for you. Let him give in some way or other. It may be humbling, because after all it is you that desires to help him; however, it may very well be that the help he really needs most of all is to gain his sense of assurance, his self-confidence. For him self-respect may come only through doing or giving something. There are times when you can give the most by simply being a gracious receiver.

In the Old Testament, we find frequent reference to the anointing of the chosen such as kings, a physical anointing of the individual's head with sacred oil. In the instance of the selection of the young man, Saul, the first king of Israel, we read, "Then Samuel took the vial of oil and poured it upon Saul's head and kissed him saying, 'Is it not that Jehovah hath anointed thee to be prince over this, His inheritance?'" Metaphysically, Samuel represents the hearing quality of the soul, the receptivity. The inner ear is attuned to the spirit through its readiness to be still and listen and understand; this is a symbol of prayer. It is the experience through which the human mind becomes open and receptive and obedient. After Saul had been thus anointed, the spirit of Jehovah descended noticeably on him and enabled him to prophesy with a new tongue and to speak and to act in a kingly manner. The people who saw and heard him asked, "What is this that has come unto the son of Kish?" It is inevitable that an outer change will take place following every anointing by the spirit. Likewise, after every prayer in which we release the hardened thoughts of human consciousness in favor of patiently awaiting the softening influence of the spirit, the active, motivating power of God.

The dynamic life is the meek and receptive life. Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." This means meek toward being receptive toward God and gracious for our ability and in our willingness to give and likewise to receive. Who knows that he is nothing without the inlet through which he may become an outlet to all there is in God, a person who is a gracious receiver. Prayer is an experience in receptivity and listening; this is why we should avoid trying to say something or do something to God. True prayer is letting go, and exercising meekness and openness and readiness. When the faucet is to make water flow, it does not turn and beg the cistern for more water; it simply opens the tap and lets. The flow takes care of itself, it happens. We say, "God can do no more for you than He can do through you!" God can only do what you will receive.

So, when things happen, when blessings come to you, be a gracious receiver. Bless the giver, but give thanks to God. Dedicate yourself to the law of giving, but do not feel that you have to repay that which you have received; accept it as the demonstration of the law, the receiving of previous giving, and then let your giving initiate a new claim.