

16. Building Relationships and the Gift of Giving

In our last four topics, we have looked at ways to use the spiritual gifts of prophecy, serving, teaching and exhorting to build relationships for the purpose of evangelism. Today, we will be looking at the gift of giving and some effective ways to build relationships with non-Christians if we have this gift. Those of you who have this gift will see some ways that God can use your gift to share the Gospel effectively. Those of you who do not have this gift will have a better understanding of why people who have this gift build relationships in a different way than you do.

We might use the following definition for the gift of giving: “To give generously so that faith may be strengthened, needs may be met and others may be able to minister because we have given of our own souls - Romans 12:8, 1:11-12; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 2:8.” In relation to other Christians, the Christian who has the gift of giving tends to emphasize giving to needs which are often not recognized by others. There will also often be an emphasis on giving to missions, so that the Word of God can be carried worldwide. The person with the gift of giving will often encourage other Christians to share in the ministry of giving so that his or her giving is multiplied.

The word that is translated “to give” means “*to impart or to share*” and deals with much more than just giving money or things as we will see when we look at the various verses related to this particular word. This is important to understand because it helps us to recognize the many situations where the Holy Spirit uses this gift to build bridges to share the Gospel. The following are some of the ways that a person with this gift will build bridges to share the Gospel with non-Christians:

1. In Romans 12:8, we see that the one with the gift of giving is to give with simplicity or liberality. Here, we see that the one who has this gift is to use that gift free from hypocrisy and with an openness of heart that reveals itself by generosity. As we share with those who are not Christians, they will be quick to recognize any hypocrisy so we need to examine our own attitudes. The person who gives with a God honoring attitude will not be looking for thanks or personal recognition but his purpose will be to glorify God. The person with the gift of giving is often much quicker to recognize needs and share to meet those needs both with Christians and non-Christians. When this giving is done to glorify God, the non-Christian feels accepted and loved by the Christian. If this giving is done for thanks or personal recognition, the non-Christian will feel that he has been used.

2. In Romans 1:11-12, we see that Paul wanted to share some spiritual gift so that the Romans could be established. The purpose of this was so that they could be encouraged. Here, we see that giving may involve the giving of encouragement. Most non-Christians are open to one who will share encouragement with them as they go through times of trial in their lives especially if those times include times of need where someone shares to meet their particular need. The story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37 is certainly an excellent example of one who reached out to another during a time of great need.

3. In Ephesians 4:28, we see that one of the purposes for working and earning money is to be able

to share with those who have needs. Then, in Galatians 6:10, we see that we are to do good to all especially to those who are of the household of faith. The Lord gives us the opportunity to work so that we can earn money to share with those who have needs, including those who are not yet of the household of faith. As we share with the genuine needs of those who are not Christians, we will have the opportunity to share the reason why we have a care and concern for the person who is not yet a Christian. In this way we may cause the person to have a desire to know why Christians are different. That often results in opportunities to share the Gospel with that person.

4. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, we see that the word is used to speak of sharing your life with a person. Paul, Silas and Timothy shared their lives with new Christians so that they could help these new Christians grow. As they shared their lives with new Christians, the families of those new Christians had the opportunity to see the difference that Christ makes in a life. Through sharing with new Christians, the Lord also opens up opportunities for us to share the Gospel with their family members that are not yet Christians. In fact, an ideal way to build a relationship with a non-Christian is to invite a new Christian to bring a friend or family member to share a meal with you so that you can get acquainted with the non-Christian. We see in Matthew 9:9-13 that Matthew found that was an ideal way to share Christ with his friends.

5. In Luke 3:11, we see that sharing is very effective in building relationships with non-Christians when it involves sharing with others to meet their basic needs. In this verse we see that clothing and food are two of the most basic needs that we can meet as we share with others. One of the things that we see in that verse is that the person shares a specific thing with a specific person to meet a specific need. The value of sharing to meet basic needs is that it provides an opportunity for face to face contact with the person so that we can build a relationship with that person. That will often open up opportunities to share the Gospel.

6. In 2 Corinthians 5:18, we see that God has shared with us the ministry of reconciliation. Since God has shared that particular ministry with each of us, He will lead us to opportunities to share with others as we pray and yield our lives to Him each day to be His hands, His feet and His mouth to share that message of reconciliation with others. Those who have the gift of giving will often find that those opportunities come as they are sharing with other kinds of needs of non-Christians.

7. In Acts 20:34-35 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-9, we see that sharing with the weak and the poor are two key opportunities to share with those who are in need. The word that is used for weak speaks of those who are without strength, the needy or the sick. In these verses, we see that:

- ◆ Paul worked to meet his own needs
- ◆ Paul worked to meet the needs of his companions
- ◆ Paul worked to give to the weak
- ◆ Paul encourages us to give generously
- ◆ Paul encourages us to give as we have purposed in our hearts
- ◆ Paul encourages us to give cheerfully
- ◆ Paul encourages us to give by the fact that God will provide so that we can abound in every good work
- ◆ Paul encourages us to follow the example of God who scattered abroad and gives to the poor

God has given us what we have so that we can share with others. Those who have the gift of giving will often notice needs that go unnoticed by others. The Lord will use their actions to meet those needs to build relationships with those who are not yet Christians so that they can share the message of reconciliation with them. May the Lord richly bless you as you use what God has given you to build bridges to those who are not yet Christians for the purpose of sharing the Gospel with them.