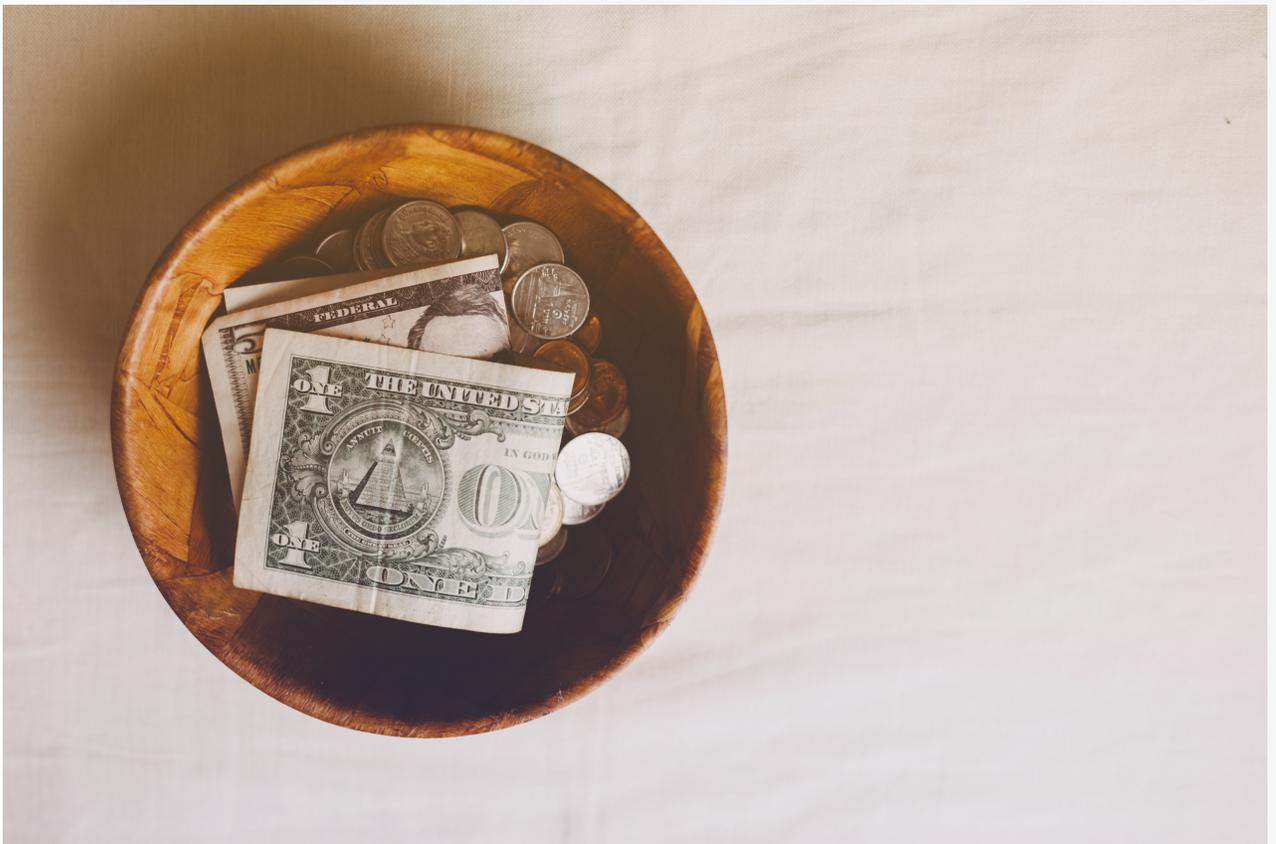


THE TEN PLEASURES

EXODUS 20:15

# THE PLEASURE OF GIVING



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**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

What do you think would make you happier? Getting a million dollars or giving away a million dollars. Probably most of us would say "Getting a million dollars." But Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than receive" (Acts 20:35). Giving makes us happier than getting. How? **How can giving make us happier than getting?**

## BACKGROUND

Each of the commandments reveal and reflect God's character. This one reveals God as the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17) and calls us to reveal and reflect God as givers of good and perfect gifts. If we do we'll find profound pleasure in giving just as God does.



This looks like an easy commandment to obey.



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# 1. THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO OBEY THIS COMMANDMENT

We start by looking at what the Reformed confessions and catechisms teach about what this commandment requires and forbids. Here's a synthesis of the Heidelberg Catechisms 110-111, Shorter Catechism 74-75, and Larger Catechism 141-142 as they summarize and simplify the Bible's teaching

## **GET LAWFULLY**

### **Required**

Truth, faithfulness, and justice  
in contracts and commerce

### **Forbidden**

Theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving anything that is stolen.  
Fraudulent dealing, false weights and measures, removing landmarks.  
Injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust.

## **GIVE FREELY**

### **Required**

Giving and lending freely,  
according to our abilities,  
and the necessities of others.

## **STEWARD CAREFULLY**

### **Required**

A provident care and study to  
get, keep, use, and dispose these things  
which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature  
and suitable to our condition.  
Frugality (prudence/moderation)

### **Forbidden**

All abuse or squandering of his gifts.  
And all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate.  
Prodigality (outrageous extravagance)

## **WORK DILIGENTLY**

### **Required**

A lawful calling  
and diligence in it;

### **Forbidden**

Unlawful callings  
Idleness  
Wasteful gaming



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## SUE RELUCTANTLY

### Required

Avoid

unnecessary lawsuits,  
suretyship (taking legal liability for another's debts)  
or other like engagements.

### Forbidden

Vexatious lawsuits  
Unjust disclosures

## LOVE FINANCIALLY

### Required

Endeavor, by all just and lawful means,  
to procure, preserve, and promote  
the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

### Forbidden

Oppression, extortion, unreasonable interest rates, bribery  
Buying up of commodities to enhance the price.  
All other unjust or sinful ways of  
taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him,  
or of enriching ourselves;

## ENJOY THANKFULLY

### Forbidden

Defrauding ourselves of  
the due use and comfort  
of that estate which God hath given us.

## CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Get lawfully:** An honest dollar is better than a dishonest million.

**Give freely:** Not slowly, reluctantly, or transactionally but cheerfully.

**Steward carefully:** Steward your personal world and the physical world.

**Work diligently:** Laziness is stealing. A poor work ethic reflects our view of God.

**Sue reluctantly:** Enter into legal obligations and disputes with extreme care.

**Love financially:** Ask, "How can I help others towards financial success?" (1 John 3:17-18).

**Enjoy thankfully:** God enjoys giving us gifts and therefore we should enjoy receiving them (1 Tim. 6:17)

WE GET FROM GOD  
TO GIVE LIKE GOD



I can enjoy thankfully but how do I get joy in the other areas?



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## 2. THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO FIND PLEASURE IN GIVING

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" goes against all our culture tells us. Let me help you believe and act upon it by giving you eight reasons why it is more blessed to give money than to get it. All God's laws are given to enhance and elevate our lives, so obeying this one will not spoil or ruin our happiness but rather increase it.

### Giving Exhibits God's Heart

And although God's gifts are unprecedented, unrepeatable, and unbeatable, we are still called to copy God's giving, to be mini-pictures of his infinitely large heart. What a privilege and honor to be his image bearers in this way. The larger our hearts, the larger the picture we paint of God's character. What do people think of God when they think of the way we use our money or work?

### Giving Illustrates God's Salvation

At the heart of the gospel is sacrificial self-giving. That's why when the apostle Paul wanted to encourage the Corinthians to give more, he pointed them to the person and work of Christ ( 2 Cor. 8:9). When we give sacrificially, painfully, and lovingly, we draw a small-scale picture of the gospel message.

### Giving Trusts God's Provision

The biggest deterrent to giving is fear, the fear that if I give away too much, I won't have enough for this or that. When we give sacrificially, above and beyond what is comfortable and easy, we express our faith and trust in God to provide for us and our families. Cast your crumbs upon the water and enjoy seeing multiple loaves returning (Eccl. 11:1). It is such a delight to see God fulfill his promise of provision when we obey Him.

### Giving Widens God's Smile

The Lord loves "a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). It delights him to see his people gladly opening their hearts and hands to provide for the needs of his church and indeed of all his creatures. Nothing makes a Christian happier than knowing that she's made God happy, and happy giving means a happy God.

### Giving Advances God's Kingdom

Think of what blessing results when we fund the mission of Christ's church. We are paying salaries of ministers and missionaries; we are funding resources for outreach, evangelism, and discipleship. But above all we are investing in the spiritual and eternal welfare of people from every nation, tribe, kindred, and tongue. Our dollars are changing homes, relationships, countries, and even the eternal destiny of many souls. Although most of us can't trace the impact of every dollar we donate, God traces it, and I believe that in heaven He will reveal all the lives our money has touched through the years and even bring us together with those who have been blessed by our giving—and those who have blessed us by their giving.

### Giving Promotes God's Sanctification of Us

Giving promotes not only God's work through us but also God's work in us, our sanctification. Giving money, especially when it pains us, is work that requires much self-denial and self-crucifixion. Every act of giving weakens and breaks our sinful and selfish nature, empowering God's work of grace in our hearts. Yes, dollars leave our pockets, but sin also leaves our hearts. And that's a great deal. Priceless actually.



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## Giving Praises God's character

Giving in a right spirit is an act of worship. It is rendering God a tribute of praise. It is saying, "You gave me everything, and here is a small expression of my gratitude and praise for all your good gifts. It is only a token, a sample of what I really feel, but you know the heart that lies behind it." David sang, "What shall I render to the Lord / For all his benefits toward me?" (Ps. 116:12).

## Giving Increases our Happiness

"But, but," you say, "it sounds as if God gets all the benefits from my giving. What blessing do I get from it?" If the previous seven reasons don't make your heart overflow with joy, here's one more that should do it. God has baked blessing into giving, as even secular research is confirming. Here are some findings from recent research:

- **Giving away a tenth of our income improves personal finances:** "Researchers compared tithers to non-tithers using nine financial health indicators, and found that tithers were better off in every category."
- **Spending money on someone else makes you happier:** Students who were randomly assigned to spend money on others experienced greater happiness than those assigned to spend money on themselves.
- **Spending money on shared experiences produces more happiness than selfish purchases:** Money spent on doing things together produced more happiness than buying things
- **Giving increases health and well-being:** It gives a sense of meaning, increases physical activity, strengthens social bonds, improves immune function, and even slows down aging.
- **Giving increases love for and from others:** Giving connects people and cultivates a sense of community.
- **Giving money or time to charity increases subjective well-being:** The emotional return as much as is enjoyed by a doubling of household income
- **Volunteering reduces depression:** Such giving of time also increases longevity, raises mood, improves time management skills, and enhances relationships.

### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Get joy from God's joy:** We can get great joy in the way giving makes God happy. He rejoices when his character is exhibited, his Gospel is illustrated, his provision is trusted, his love is exercised, his kingdom is advanced, his people are holier, and his character is praised.

**Get joy from your heart:** We can get joy in how God's blessing on giving improves our finances, changes our spending purposes and patterns, increases our health and psychology, grows love for others. improves our emotions, and reduces depression.

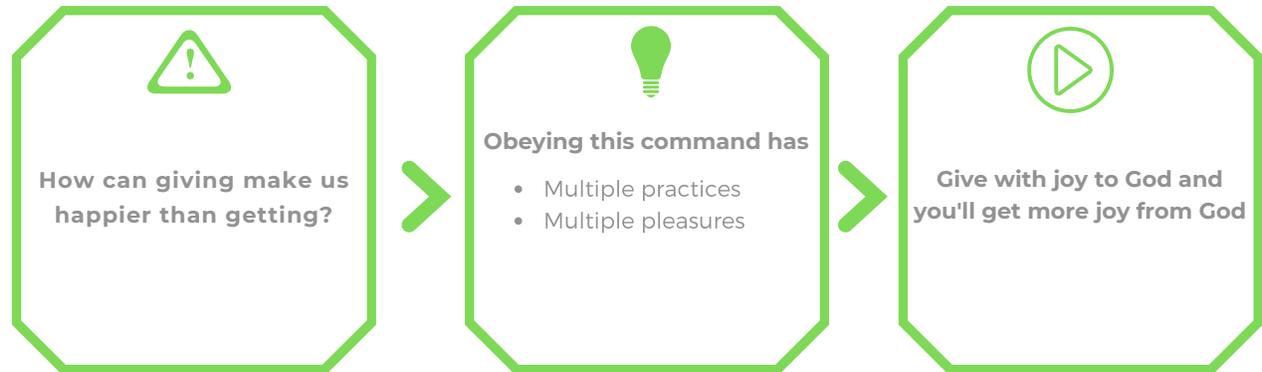
GIVE WITH JOY  
GET MORE JOY



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



## SUMMARY



## A NEW CHAPTER

- **Parents:** Be open with your kids about your finances so that you can disciple them in their finances and teach them how to honor God.
- **Teens:** Give to God from the first income you get. It does not get easier the more you earn.
- **Young Married:** Save 20% of your income rather than budgeting to spend 100% of income. This will give you margin for the inevitable surprises and build savings for family and retirement.
- **Lazy:** You are stealing glory from God, money from your employer, and joy from yourself.
- **Wealthy:** Enjoy without guilt and give without resentment.
- **Seniors:** How are you stewarding your assets? There are many Christian organizations, like the Barnabas Foundation that can help you apply this command in your death.
- **Thieves:** Remember the thief on the cross gave nothing but got full salvation (Luke 23:33-43)
- **Discipleship:** Watch out for new Financial discipleship program from Pastor Jean.
- **Prayer:** Giver of every good and perfect gift, give us your giving heart so that we can give with more heart and so get more for our hearts.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What makes it hard for you to give to God and others?
2. When have you found pleasure in giving?
3. In what ways did the width of this command surprise you? Which of the seven practices are you strong in and which are you weak in?
4. How does this command apply to your stewardship of the environment?
5. How did this sermon change your view of God?
6. How will this sermon change your work ethic, financial planning, giving?