

Give and It Shall Be Given

I was in a church where the pastor let me know he really felt taking an offering in a service hindered the flow of the Spirit. He said there was no "good" way to take an offering. Was it coincidental this church gave me the smallest offering to my recollection I have ever received for a four-day crusade?

Is an evangelist asking for money really the charlatanism Hollywood likes to depict? Are offerings just a "necessary evil," or as the Word says, is it really "more blessed to give than to receive?" (Acts 20:35).

I believe there is a principle of sowing and reaping, relating to giving. Luke 6:38 says, "Give and it shall be given unto you". If that is true, then we can believe God whatever we give to needy people and to ministry, God will see it comes back to us. I have found this true in my own life. Thus, I want to give a testimony of giving, as it relates to cars.

When Kathy and I resigned our church in Hawaiian Gardens, and were preparing to begin evangelizing nationally, we bought a travel trailer, so we could park it next to churches or in RV parks during our meetings. Kathy would home-school the kids in the trailer. I would pray and study and make phone calls in the church during the meetings. The trailer was the biggest we could find (10,000 lbs. GVW).

It was after the purchase we discovered only two vehicles would be able to pull a trailer this big: a 454 cubic inch Chevy Suburban or a van with a similar size engine. I started looking around. I was surprised to discover how expensive they were -- as much as \$40,000! I couldn't find a van that fit our needs, so I started concentrating on Suburbans, new and used. I looked all over but couldn't find one that met our needs -- either the engine was too small, or it was painted black (traveling evangelists can't have black vehicles, or they'll be spending all their time washing them on the road!). I drove all over S. Calif., it seems, looking for one, to no avail.

I started looking for vans again, but just had no idea how to find the right one. I think I remember praying, "Lord, if I need a van, you'll need to lead me to it." It was getting down to the wire. The trailer was almost finished being built to our specifications. We would have to pick it up soon, and would need a vehicle to do so!

I told Kathy, "Kathy, we need a miracle. Let's sow seed for that miracle." The church council had given us an older Brick Park Avenue someone had given the church. It looked and ran well, and I enjoyed driving it. The new pastor only had one vehicle. I suggested to Kathy we give the incoming pastor the Buick the church had given us, and let that be "seed sown" for our miracle. She agreed, and we notified the church council.

Finally, the day arrived we had to buy a vehicle so we could pick up the finished trailer. I was about to leave home to look at a used suburban I saw advertised, determined we had to buy one today, new or used. It was moments before we were leaving to when we got a phone call from a car salesman I had talked to weeks earlier about a Suburban. He asked if I had bought one yet, and I told him no. He said he had a new Suburban he thought we would like. It was at the closest GMC dealership to our home! We went immediately to look at it: It wasn't a "fit," but there on the parking lot was a new (1995) GMC conversion van. It had six comfortable captain's chairs. It had two AC's, a TV/VCR combo (our kids used a video series for school

from Abeka), Michelin tires, a towing package, and (of course!) a 454 engine. We test drove it and it seemed to be exactly what we needed, but I had to know for sure. I went home and called a bunch of dealerships around southern Calif. and couldn't find one like it. It seemed to be God's choice for us, and to make a long story short, we got it for about \$5,000 less than a comparably equipped Suburban.

It turned out to be, without debate, a far better vehicle for our purposes than a Suburban. Actually, a suburban would have been too small! It was nearly trouble free, and we still drive it nearly nine years later. We never remember seeing another van comparably equipped. I truly believe it was a miracle from God -- a miracle we sowed seed toward by giving our Buick away to ministry. We gave. It was given unto us!

Years later, (and just recently), my nephew, Derek Jaramillo, was heading for Bible College where Carissa goes. He needed a good car. I offered to help the family find him one (they live in Idaho) and took the time to do so. Then, they asked me to help them sell a truck they had so the money could go toward a better car for my nephew. I said I would do so, little knowing, though swamped with ministry business, I would have to spend a good number of hours fooling around with getting it sold. But, I gave my "valuable" time because it was for a good cause -- helping my nephew get started toward ministry.

One man who came to look at the truck, when I wasn't home, drove off in a beautiful 1997 Buick Park Ave. (Remember, we had given away our Park Ave. nine years previously!). As he drove away, Kathy noticed a sign on the car that said "for sale". She said to the Lord, "Oh, Lord, I wish that man would trade us that car for our Corolla." We had a small Toyota we had thought about selling and getting a bigger car. Our son was learning to drive, and we wanted him to do so in a bigger car. We were much too busy however, to fool with looking for another car at this time. I called the man with the car for sale, to discuss the truck, and I asked him about his Buick. He was a Spirit-filled Baptist preacher, and was hoping to down-size to a smaller car. He had thought about a Corolla or a Camry.

Well, to make a long story short. He brought the Buick to our house. We didn't have to drive across the street to look at it! We loved it, and over the internet found the value of the two cars were within \$200 of each other. So, we virtually traded straight across. He drove off in our Corolla and we kept His beautiful Park Ave. The same model we had given was "returned" to us nine years later! It was a precious gift from God and once again proved the power of giving. I believe in giving to ministry. It has worked through the years again and again for us.

I believe the above pastor's attitude about giving was wrong. God "loves a cheerful giver." Give cheerfully. Expect too to receive! I do not apologize for asking you to continue generously supporting my ministry. I pray daily God will reward you financially in such a way, you will know it is because you gave to this ministry. Write and tell us when it happens, please!