

January - March 2017

# ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH



## When Things Go Right

A Child of God • Does God Hear the Prayers of the Non-Converted?  
It is More Blessed to Give Than to Receive

## Half a Plan

2016 was a year of surprises. No one could have ever predicted how the year will turn out. Not even the seasoned political, social, financial analysts could foresee nor direct the events that transpired in 2016. Thus, 2016 was a surprising year and I would surmise that every year before last and the years ahead will all be surprising years as well.

Now what are the surprises of 2016?

### 1. President Rodrigo Duterte

Philippine Presidency was a huge surprise. In January 2016, no one saw it coming. No one planned for it, not even President Duterte himself. No amount of advanced planning by Vice President Jejomar "Jojo" Binay Sr., Senator Grace Poe or Secretary Manuel "Mar" Roxas II prevented the surprise outcome of the election.

### 2. President-elect Donald Trump

Who in the world can predict that Mr. Donald Trump will win the US Presidential Elections. All the media surveys were against him and in favor of Secretary Hillary Clinton.

### 3. Brexit

Who would have thought in early 2016 that UK will vote to exit the European Union. Until the last referendum week, the NO vote was still ahead in the surveys. The exit shocked the world creating ripples in the world's Central Banks and financial institutions.

### 4. Rise of the Isis

No one predicted the rise of the Isis in the Middle East. A reign of terror that caused unprecedented humanitarian crisis and deluge of refugees into Europe.

### 5. Marijuana legalized in California

Californians could smoke marijuana—legally.

*continued on page 15*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	When Things Go Right
7	A Child of God

10	Does God Hear the Prayers of the Non-Converted?
12	It is More Blessed to Give Than to Receive

# When Things Go Right

by Winston S. Co

***When things go wrong and nothing works, there are two (2) things people do. Either they come to God on their knees in prayer or they blame God for their sufferings. Yet, sometimes when things go right, people tend to boast about their exploits and forget God. How about you, what should be your attitude when things go right?***

**L**ife is a roller coaster ride. That is probably what makes life more interesting. You get sunny days and rainy days, happy days and gloomy days, awesome days and challenging days. Sometimes things go wrong, and on other times everything goes right. Sometimes it does not work and sometimes it works out to be very fine. That is the nature of life. Nonetheless, we want all things to be all right all the time.

Consider that you have everything going for you. You have a good job; making above average income; got a new company car, moved in to an apartment; looking at the next promotion; enjoying a flourishing career. On the family front, you have a loving spouse; smart kids, kids all doing well in school and going to universities in a few short years, caring *lolos* and *lolas*, the in-laws are great folks. Everything is going right!

What do people often do when things are going right? People plan for more good things; like better career, bigger house, more cars, sending children to better universities, etc.

All of these things are good and best for us. God is happy when we are doing exceedingly well. God said His plan is to bless us and to prosper us. God rejoices in our prosperity (***Jeremiah 29:11***). In fact, all blessings come from the Lord especially for God's people (***James 1:17***).

## Going Right

When things are going right there are two primary emotions that one feels; they are:

1. **Euphoria** - Success has the tendency to make

people feel they are 'super men.' They feel they are luckier, better, superior than the average individual. They tend to be proud, arrogant and boastful of their achievements. They become self-absorbed, egoistic, selfish and overly self-confident and righteous with a sense of invincibility.

2. **Anxiety** - Anxiety is borne out of fear that good things might not last. The tendency to be anxious about our success is unavoidable. Therefore, people instinctively try to overcome the anxiety by planning ahead for even greater success for tomorrow. People tend to work ever harder on their career, business and family, thus becoming too preoccupied with things of the present and of tomorrow.

Unfortunately, when things are going so right many people have the tendency to turn out so wrong. We have seen a lot of this phenomenon with celebrities, politicians, businessmen, and famous people, and it can also manifest in many of us. We see many of these people go into drugs, addictions, debauchery, illicit activities, immorality etc.

These are very dangerous things that often inflict people who take for granted the showers of God's blessing. People can get egocentric and so preoccupied on more success that we forget the very source of our blessings.

## The Euphoria of King Solomon

We all know King Solomon as the wisest king

who ever lived. When King Solomon went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and God asked young King Solomon to make a wish. Solomon asked for wisdom—a discerning heart to govern God's people. The Lord was pleased to grant his request (**1 Kings 3:9-14**). God appeared to Solomon a second time at the dedication of the temple that he built (**1 Kings 9:1-5**). During Solomon's lifetime, God granted the nation peace and prosperity (**1 Kings 4:24**).

Wow, everything was going extraordinary well for the young King Solomon! He was favored by God and endowed with understanding, wisdom and riches far beyond any king of his days (**1 Kings 10:23-24**).

Solomon's reign was the pinnacle of Jewish history. Everyone was united. Their neighbors didn't bother them—in fact, they come to learn from Solomon. Peace and prosperity spread all over their land.

Now, euphoria and his feeling of invincibility set in. He started to show off his wisdom and wealth (**1 Kings 10:1-5**). And, he loved his foreign wives against the command of God. He thought he could handle the foreign wives. Some of these foreign wives must be exceedingly beautiful and wise too. Many are princess given in marriage to Solomon as pact of peace between the nations. Many came with servants who eventually became concubines of Solomon. By tradition these women must be converted to Judaism before they can be married to King Solomon. But, most of them married for convenience so that they can retain their pagan belief.

King Solomon must have felt with utmost confidence that with his wisdom he could easily handle the 1,000 or so wives and concubines. Well, he over-estimated himself. He was not able to handle his foreign wives. Eventually, Solomon fell into sin. Solomon thought he was invincible—a super hero who could do no wrong.

**1 Kings 11:4-6** and verses **9-13** recorded Solomon's euphoria and over-estimation of himself which led him away from God.

### The Anxiety of Jeroboam

God promised to make Jeroboam king of the 10 tribes of Israel (**1 Kings 11:29-37**). God took the 10 tribes of Israel from King Rehoboam, son of Solomon, and gave them to Jeroboam in fulfillment of the promise. What a good fortune! Things were turning out exceedingly well for him. All what he needed to do was to stay focused and faithful to God and he would have an enduring dynasty as God promised (**1 Kings 11:38-39**).

With all the good things happening to him, he became anxious. He feared that pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem in the territory of King Rehoboam, son of Solomon would provide occasion for the people to return back to their old allegiance with King Rehoboam. In his anxiety, he forgot God's promises to him.

Thus, he built two counterfeit temples with golden calves, one in Bethel and the other in Dan and he encouraged people not to go to the temple of God in Jerusalem. He also changed the sacred holy days of God (**1 Kings 12:25-33**).

A “man of God” came to warn him that God hated his deeds and would destroy the altar where he stood. In defiance, he ordered the prophet arrested instead. But Jeroboam's hand was “dried up”, and the altar before which he stood rent into half. At his urgent plea his hand was restored to him again. But, the message of warning or the miracle made no impression on him (**1 Kings 13:1-6**).

**1 Kings 13:33-34** recorded Jeroboam's continuous sinning against God; all because of his anxiety and fear of losing his kingship. He was too preoccupied with securing his future.

### Israel's Situation

Israel as a nation had the same problem. God warned them when they were encamped East of Jordan before entering the Promised Land—a land so blessed and bountiful—a land 'flowing with milk and honey'.

God warned them saying: When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things



you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery (**Deuteronomy 6:10-12**).

Too much of a good things—when things go right—can cause God's people to forget the Lord (**Hosea 13:4-6**).

We too can have the tendency to forget God when good things happen. Just like King Solomon, King Jeroboam and the nation of Israel. It is interesting that in times when the Lord blesses us, that is the time when most people turn God's blessings into stumbling blocks for themselves - in the process causing us to sin against God.

### **Blessing to Blessings**

This should not be the case with God's people. The intent of God is to move us from blessing to blessings. When things go right, these are occasions for thanksgiving and to further strengthen our faith in the Lord.

So today we shall consider seven (7) ways to acknowledge God's blessings instead of stumbling over them.

This is what God wants you to do when things go right with you in your life. Consider **Deuteronomy Chapter 8**.

<sup>1</sup> Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors.

<sup>2</sup> Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

<sup>3</sup> He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

<sup>4</sup> Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.

<sup>5</sup> Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

<sup>6</sup> Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him.

<sup>7</sup> For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills;

<sup>8</sup> a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey;

<sup>9</sup> a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.

<sup>10</sup> When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

<sup>11</sup> Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.

<sup>12</sup> Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down,

<sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied,

<sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

<sup>15</sup> He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock.

<sup>16</sup> He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you.

<sup>17</sup> You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."

<sup>18</sup> But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and

so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

<sup>19</sup> If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed.

<sup>20</sup> Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.

The seven (7) ways to remember God's providence and blessings are derived from Deuteronomy 8; they are:

1. Remember who you were when you started. Remember where you came from. Remember how you get to where you are today. Never think that it was through your power and strength and ability that good things are happening to you. You need to look back to consider where you started. Try to see God's hand in your well-being and remember He gave you the opportunity and the ability for you to be where you are today.

Many people pray to God asking for financial security. When they get a promotion and a salary raise, they conveniently forget God. They failed to realize and understand that God created the opportunity for them. They thought their ability had brought them the good fortune.

2. Remember to humble yourself before God when things go right. People tend to boast about their own ability when good things happen to them. Boasting creates occasion to blaspheme against God. Instead, when things go right we must realize that the blessings come from God's providence.

3. Remember the day when you look for Him, when you seek Him, when you ask Him to guide you and to prosper you, to bless you so that all things will work out for you and your family. The best way to remember God is to keep a prayer diary. List down the request you made of God. Go back to your prayer request list and you will be surprised on what God has done for you. Remember He is the One who watches over you

and blesses you.

4. Remember to keep God's commandments. Do not forsake His commandments, laws and decrees. Follow and obey them for they are your life. Keep the Sabbaths, the tithes and the food laws. It would be tragic for anyone to break God's commandments and commit sin after receiving God's blessings. Remember when you promised to be obedient to Him and His words.

5. Remember how you made a covenant with Him. Remember the day you asked God to forgive your sins and receive you as a son and a daughter and to bless you with an eternal blessing. It is because of this covenant that God grants you good things.

6. Remember to acknowledge God with praises and thanksgiving for all His provenances. Remember to pray with thanksgiving and give glory to God when good things happen to you.

7. Remember to honor Him with your wealth and your substance. It's not about money. It is about thanksgiving and honoring Him.

### To Sum It Up...

Life does not have to be a roller-coaster ride. It can be a blessing-to-blessing journey.

We hope and pray things go very right for all of you. And, when fabulous and amazing great things happen to you—it is hoped that you will not forget God.

May God's abundant blessings lead us to glorify Him, praise Him and give thanks to Him.

May we remember that once we were nothing, lost and sinful until He came into our lives. May we be humble and realize that all good things comes from above. May glory, honor and praise be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for all the good things we experience.

When things go right—remember God and acknowledge Him with praises and thanksgiving and never forget His commandments (**Deuteronomy 6:24-25**).

May His blessings multiply upon all of you!

Praise the Lord! **AG**



# A Child of God

by Ely Mellomida

**A**lthough Jesus considers His followers His brethren (**Hebrews 2:11**), from time to time He also calls them children (**John 21:5**). The Apostle John on the other hand went further to address believers “little children” (**1 John 2:1,12,13,18,28, 1 John 3:7,18; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:21**). We know that the disciples are grown up and mature men before Jesus “called” them to work with Him as fishers of men (**Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17**). How do we understand the terminology of Jesus and John in calling Christian children?

On one occasion Jesus' disciples (whose basic exposure and orientation are limited to the current system of governance in their time) asked Him who will be (among them?) become the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (**Matthew 18:1**). Jesus gave an answer that obviously went contrary to the disciples expectations. He said: Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven, (**Matthew 18: 3-4**).

So what exactly is Jesus trying to teach us in asking believers to be converted like little children? Is He saying that childish virtues carry more wit and effectiveness that can be relied upon to assume greater responsibilities in the kingdom

of God? Isn't that a rather strange perspective? What can children do, are they more capable than adults? If diligence, maturity, intellectual excellence, astute stewardship and management skills are qualities deserving to become kings and priests, why use children as example?

## Attitude & Aptitude

A closer look at Jesus' teachings will give us a hint that His lessons dwelt more on attitude rather than aptitude. This can be easily recognised from His famous message known as the Sermon on the Mount. It is difficult to find a line where Jesus talks of expertise, intellectual ability and other humanly acquired qualifications from these passages. Notice:

**Matthew 5:3** - Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Matthew 5:4** - Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

**Matthew 5:5** - Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

**Matthew 5:6** - Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.



**Matthew 5:7** - Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

**Matthew 5:8** - Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

**Matthew 5:9** - Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

**Matthew 5:10** - Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Matthew 5:11** - Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

**Matthew 5:12** - Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### Qualities of Children

The basic elements of true Christianity is fully guided by an attitude that conforms to that of Jesus (**1 Peter 2:23; Philippians 2:5-8**). Now, what do children have in common that we need to emulate? (We mean children who have not been fully influenced and exposed to the evils of society; who grew up in an environment overseen by responsible parents) The simple lessons about childlike qualities are;

- Children do not speak evil against, nor gossip or judgmental about their fellow children. Adults are likely to commit what James warned about: **James 4:11-12** “Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbour?”

- Children easily forget hurts. They do not harbour nor hide ill feelings. They quarrel from

time to time, but play again with the same child they quarrelled with. Their “hatred” if any, easily dissipates. Adults need this advisory from Paul more than children do: **Colossians 3:12-13**, “Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

- Children do not attempt to settle scores or become vindictive. Grown-ups are likely the ones who needed this most: **Romans 12:17-19**, “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.”

- Children are not resentful of authority and are willing to submit to superiors; foremost among which are their parents or teachers. In today's world where independent institutions and libertarian movements are proliferating, it has become ordinary to resent and defy duly constituted authorities. The primary object of this admonition from Paul is not for children: **Romans 13:1-4**, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”

The same instruction is given to the church as a whole: **1 Peter 5:5**, Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be



submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

- Children are contented, settled. Unlike adults, children don't have lofty goals or ambitions. An adult with so many needs and so many wants has to be told that "godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction, (**1 Timothy 6:6-9**).

- Children are solely and wholly reliant on parents. They're never anxious nor worried about what's going to happen next, or where to get the next meal. All they do is to trust their parents for sustenance and go where their parents lead them. Christ has this to say to adults: So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own (**Matthew 6:31-34**).

- Children can be easily taught humility. Searching for boastful child is not an easy find. Ironically, adults who consider themselves mature and in possession of in-depth biblical understanding find it hard to be humble. It is not easy to yield if you think you know better. The tense atmosphere during religious discussions in which all the participants based their arguments from the Bible give us an idea how humility is being observed in the breach.

James wrote: Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or

deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice (**James 3:13-16, NIV**).

Our Creator, Saviour and Judge, epitomizes the virtue of humility. **Philippians 2:5-8**, Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

### Why Childlike

Why is a childlike attitude important? Jesus gave a warning to the Christian generations of today to consider seriously. Let's revisit the passage quoted earlier: **Matthew 18:1-4**, *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

The condition to become converted like a child to enter God's kingdom is non-negotiable nor compromising. In fact the three (3) writers of the gospel never missed to record it (**Matthew 18:4; Mark 10:15**, *Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.*; **Luke 18:16**, *But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.*). Now we know why Jesus wants them to adapt the attitude of a child. And if they are commanded to do so, there is no reason why the 21st century Christian will not do the same. Now we know why we need to see the child's qualities in the light of what Christ wanted us to become. **AG**



# Does God Hear the Prayers of the Non-Converted?

by Lloyd W. Cary

**S**ome claim that God does not hear the prayers of an unbeliever, and quote John 9:31, which reads, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners..." Perilously, a text without a context is often a pretext! The rest of the verse says, "...but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

The good news is that God does not expect us to be perfect Christians all at once. In fact, none of us will ever be "perfect" in this life. Repentance—turning from sin—is a process, and gets God's attention. Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

The only thing we have to do to begin a relationship with God is talk with Him and be

receptive to His Word, the Bible.

The following biblical examples describe God hearing and answering the prayers of the non-converted. In most cases, the prayer is combined with repentance. In some, God responded out of compassion or to the genuine faith of the person.

- **1 John 5:14–15** tells us God answers prayers based on whether they are asked according to His will. If an unbeliever asks a prayer of God that is according to His will, nothing prevents God from answering such a prayer in His own time and way.
- In **John 3:5–10**, the people of Ninevah believed God, repented, and were spared.

- In **Genesis 21:14–19**, God mercifully heard the cries of Hagar and Ishmael and spared them from certain death.
- In **1 Kings 21:27–29**, wicked king Ahab fasted and mourned over Elijah's prophecy pertaining to his posterity. God responded by not bringing about the calamity in Ahab's lifetime.
- In **Mark 7:24–30**, the Syrophenician woman—a Gentile—besought Jesus to deliver her daughter from a demon, and she was cured.
- In **Acts 10:4**, Cornelius, a Roman centurion, prayed, fasted (**verse 30**), and was shown the way of salvation.
- In **Jeremiah 29:13**, God makes promises that are applicable for all men: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." And don't forget **2 Chronicles 7:14**.

As Christians, we are encouraged to come **BOLDLY** unto the throne of grace to find help in time of need (**Hebrews 4:14–16**). We are told that when we ask for anything according to God's will, He hears and grants our prayer (**1 John 5:14–15**). There are many other stronger promises for Christians concerning prayer as well, such as those in **Matthew 21:22**; **John 14:13**; **John 15:7**; and **James 5:14–15**.

Yes, there are instances in which God does not answer the prayers of an unbeliever. At the same time, in His grace and mercy, God can—and often does—intervene in the lives of unbelievers in response to their prayers. A very basic scripture may be found in **Hebrews 11:6**, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

To help you in your prayer life, we have a special free booklet entitled, "*How To Be More Effective In Your Prayer Life*". Just ask for it.

"Thy word  
is a lamp  
unto my feet,  
and a light  
unto my path"

Psalms 119:105

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# It is More Blessed to Give Than to Receive

by Ferdie Padilla

**W**e all have heard of the expression "***It is better to give than to receive***". People use it sometimes to coax others to give to them something they want or to give to their own causes (ex. *charity*). Supposedly, it would appeal to other people's sense of helping, hence they would give to this or that charity. There was even an amusing variation to this expression in an ad I saw in the papers 4 years ago, in the month of December, supposedly the season for giving – "It is better to give and to receive". The context of that ad was that if you buy this product and give it to your loved one as a gift, you will have the chance to receive something else if you win in their promo. I just have no way of knowing whether the ad worked or not.

## Biblical Version of the Expression

I thought that the expression "It is better to give than to receive" is found in the Bible. I searched for the exact wording but I failed. But I found a similar and I think a better expression for it. I expected this to be found in the first 4 books of the New Testament but again I was pleasantly surprised. The Biblical version I found is in the book of Acts, when Paul bid farewell to the Ephesian elders. **Acts 20:32-35**, "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up

and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" So it was our Lord Himself who said those things.

## Why It is More Blessed to Give

When we think about it, the expression does not seem to mean what it says. How do we suppose it is more blessed to give than to receive? Is it not the other way around? Is it not better or more blessed to be on the receiving end than on the giving end? Is it not better if we receive say, gifts or blessings than if we give them? Why would Christ Himself say so?

Let us examine the implication of the expression. There are several things that we can say are implied by what the Lord has said:

1. One implication is that those on the giving end are in a better position because they are able to give something. In fact, the word "**blessed**" in the expression (which comes

from the Greek word *makarios*), means “**supremely blest; by extension fortunate, well off**” (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries). Surely, we cannot give of something if we ourselves lack it. And this is not entirely confined to material things. We can give something of which we have an abundance of or at least an ample supply of. If we have material wealth, we can share some of it with our less fortunate brothers and sisters in their time of need. If we have the knack for comforting others, by all means share that ability. A lot of people need encouragement these days, within the church and outside of it. If you have been blessed with abilities that would be of help to the Work of God, then share it. God gives us something that we can utilize to help in this great commission. If you have the evangelistic gift, then use it to preach the truth. If you are able to give of yourself, of your time to others who might need them especially to the brethren, then it only means you are blessed because you have something to give. That's why it is said: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

**2.** In the process of giving, the giver eventually learns something else—acquiring the heart of a cheerful giver. The act of giving is negated if it is not accompanied by the right attitude. Paul has this to say in that regard in **2 Corinthians 9:7**, “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” In other words, it is all about attitude, what is from the heart. The giver does not give reluctantly, has no heavy feeling

when he does that. Anything given cheerfully will be well received. The receiver would thankfully accept it because he knows there is no ill feeling attached to it. The lesson learned of being a cheerful giver is in itself a great blessing. If one learns to give cheerfully, out of love, out of sincere generosity—he is a step closer to the Kingdom of God. To enter the Kingdom of God, we must all learn the lesson of giving. In other words, we become selfless in a Godly way and not selfish. The blessing is in learning to develop Godly character. That's why it can be said in this regard: It is more blessed to give than to receive. The opportunity to give of yourself, of your time, of something which you have been blessed with and share it is something that you should grab.

**3.** The expression also implies that those who give will themselves be blessed. It will come back to them even more because God will give it back according to how it was given. One who gives generously and cheerfully is bound to be blessed even more by God. Let us consider what Christ says in **Luke 6:38**, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over [now isn't that a description of one who gives generously?], will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” If you are a generous giver God will give it back to you accordingly. Christ promises it. And through the years, I believe I can say with confidence that it works. As a general observation, people who are very generous with what they have to the less fortunate or just to anyone, even a complete stranger, have

been blessed in a way that they themselves could not imagine. And the heartwarming thing is most of them attribute those blessings to God. Indeed, "It is more blessed to give than to receive".

### **Application In Our Christian Lives**

What would be the application of this in our Christian lives? Consider what Christ said to His 12 apostles when He sent them out to preach to the lost sheep of Israel, **Matthew 10:8**, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." In other words, we who have been blessed to come to the knowledge of the truth and have experienced its life changing power should likewise share it freely, without cost. And that is the guiding principle by which we, as a church do the work of God. Various literature, Bible study courses and the like are published and distributed free of charge. Bible studies are conducted and are open to the public free of charge, hoping that many more people will come to know the truth and share in the salvation promised by God.

When we apply the principle of "It is more blessed to give than to receive" in our Christian lives, we also consider other people's welfare. Paul when he quoted the Lord understood this. That's why he said that he worked hard to supply not only his needs but that of his companions as well. It is an encouragement that aims to develop and nurture love in our hearts and minds. Our neighbors' welfare is now as important as ours. And when we do this, others will begin to

respond to us in the same manner. It starts a chain reaction. If everybody else did it, I am convinced that this would be a better place to live. I personally believe that such a time will come when God finally rules over this Earth.

### **Summation**

Finally, when we come to think, this saying is actually a safeguard against greediness. The natural tendency of man is to fend for himself. Not that it is wrong per se. However, some will do this by getting as much as they can from what is available. They will want more wealth for themselves, more resources, more of the material things they can lay their hands on. In so doing, they will disregard others. In other words, they become greedy. They'd store more for themselves and the extension of themselves. When Christ said that "It is more blessed to give than to receive", He effectively set up a countermeasure against greediness that could easily crouch into our hearts and minds. The statements "I want more" or "I want to get as much as I could, if not all" is the natural leaning of man's heart. They would fall by the wayside when we heed "It is more blessed to give than to receive". When Christ said those things, He had only our welfare in mind—our spiritual welfare foremost. But there is also an implied promise of blessing if we faithfully adhere to what He had in mind. He is hoping we would understand it and do apply it in our Christian lives. He is hoping that we could be of service to others and follow His example of service and that service ultimately led to His giving His very life for us. So dear readers, let us heed what our Lord said. **AG**



6. In the Philippines, thousands had been killed in the administrations drive on anti-drug war.

7. Zika Virus

8. Pokemon Go

The list can go on and on.

### Making Plans

As the new civil “Roman” calendar looms, companies and individuals start to make plans for the New Year. This is the time of the year that New Year's resolutions are made and plans are set out. For companies, they will develop a 2017 plan, and 5-business year plan and 10-year strategic plan.

It is nice to do all these as it provides a vision, a direction and a goal in life. It makes us more focus and better as a person.

### Half a Plan

At best our plans are half a plan. You do not know what tomorrow will bring. Tomorrow will always be full of surprises. Many people think they have control over their life but in reality we don't or we have very little control of it.

**Proverbs 27:1** - “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.”

This is true. We can make plans and contingencies but we do not know what tomorrow brings. A little change in circumstances can completely change the complexion of our plans. Not only it changes a day, it changes everything. We really don't know what a day may bring!

**James 4:13-16** - Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.

James is correct. With certainty we have no control over tomorrow with certainty. None of us know what the future will bring.

### The Other Half

We only have half the plan because we do not know what tomorrow will bring. The other half of the plan is from God. **Proverbs 16:9**, *In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.*

God has the other half of your plan. So, what should we do? Two tips only:

#### 1. Make your plans together with God.

**Proverbs 16:3** - “Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.”

Plan together with God. Ask God to bless your plan. Many of our plans do not include God. Starting today, let us let God become a part of our plan. Our plans should be God centered. Whatever we plan to do should be according to God's righteousness and for the glory of God.

#### 2. Let God be part of your plan.

**Psalms 20:4** - “May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed.”

Try to share your plans with God. Commit to Him your plans and seek His counsel and wisdom. How do you do this? In prayer! Talk to God about your plans. Tell Him what is in your heart. Tell Him how you intent to accomplish it. Ask Him to bless your labor. And, you will find success! (**Psalms 20:5**)

### Complete Your Plan

There is a plan that is full proof. This plan will never fail. The full proof plan is to become a child in His Kingdom. If you seek this plan you will find it and success will be yours. In this plan you will never fail because God is with you every step of the way. Seek first the kingdom of God above anything else (**Luke 12:27-32**).

We have only half of the plan. Let God participate in the other half to make it complete. Then you will have a full plan destined to success.

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### The Church of God International Meeting Places

#### **Manila**

6th Floor, Peaksun Bldg.  
Princeton St.,  
Mandaluyong City  
Saturdays, 10 a.m.

#### **Naga**

Villa Caceres,  
Magsaysay Ave.,  
Naga City  
2nd-5th Saturdays  
10 a.m.

#### **Alabang**

Crimson Hotel,  
Entrata Urban Complex,  
Filinvest City, 2609 Civic Dr.,  
Muntinlupa City,  
Saturdays, 2 p.m.

#### **Iloilo City**

Iloilo Midtown Hotel  
Yulo St.  
Saturdays, 2 p.m.

#### **Malolos**

Hiyas ng Bulacan  
Convention Center  
Malolos City  
Saturdays, 2 p.m.

#### **Cebu**

Elegant Circle Inn  
Fuente Osmeña Circle  
Cebu City  
1st Saturday of the Month  
1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

#### **Mindanao**

Alzon's Palace, Maranding  
Lala, Lanao del Norte  
Saturdays 10 a.m.  
  
Brgy. Kiara, Don Carlos, Bukidnon  
1st & 3rd Saturday of the Month  
10 a.m.