

Why does the Bible tell us so often that we are to give? Giving is a natural by-product when we realize certain truths about God and about ourselves:

1. In the beginning, God chose to make us in his own image [cf. Genesis 1:26]. That means that he created us, not to look like him, but to be like him in his nature. It is God’s nature to give. Just as he gave us his own image, so he gave all that we needed to support this body and life. You and I both know what we did to mar that image; that’s how we lost the natural desire to give.
2. So it became necessary for God to take another critical step. Because God loved us so much, he gave his only Son to us and for us to restore his image in us [cf. St. John 3:16]. Think what was included in that giving: the necessity of Jesus Christ leaving heaven to live here, to know a life of poverty, living dependently on others, being arrested as a rebel, beaten bloody and nailed to a cross, dying there utterly abandoned.
3. That which God had given us at the beginning – his image – is now restored in us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because sin still entangles us [cf. Hebrews 12:1], his image grows stronger within us as we are **“built up...and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”** [Ephesians 4:13]. That transformation takes place as we imitate Christ more and more.

This is Life Sunday, though we should recognize the sanctity of life every day. Because of sin, it is hard to keep the point straight that we do not own ourselves or anything in our lives. If we forget that, we mishandle the gift of life – in ourselves and in others, as well as mismanage all of the other things God has given us. The psalmist says it so simply: **“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it”** [Psalm 24:1].

As Ramsey says in the video, this rocks our world if we have our heads on straight. We discover the joy of giving that God knows. We discover the joy that Christ knew in serving us through the cross [cf. Hebrews 12:2]. His image restored in us, we are content being managers; in fact we find it easier to be managers than owners. We discover that it is easier to give and that we are being transformed little-by-little by a life-time of giving.

I want to call your attention to the fact that, until this moment, I have not used the “M” word, money. We are able to give and to serve in so many ways besides how we use money, but money is one of the things in our lives; it is not ours but the Lord’s. We are managers of it, not owners. Neither God nor the church needs our money; but God wants us, and the church needs us. Like the Macedonians, first we give ourselves to the Lord; then we give ourselves to each other [cf. 2 Corinthians 8:5]. When we do that, everything else, including our money, will be managed God’s way.

The Bible tells us to give so often because we are to be imitators of Jesus Christ, the Great Giver. Understanding that sin gets in the way so that we think we own, we keep coming back to Jesus Christ so that we keep our heads on straight. The Holy Spirit helps us mature so that we discover that we want to imitate Christ, that we are freer being managers than owners, and that there is real joy in giving. Amen