

Getting and Giving

Two of our most basic urges are the urge to get and the urge to give. It is easy to become consumed by our own needs. Survival is all we care about and survival is selfish. Nothing matters except getting what we crave so desperately. We may have to lie, cheat, or steal but that doesn't stop us. We may have to blame, complain, or manipulate. We think only of ourselves, failing to show any consideration for others. We trample on the needs of others because we don't even see them.

This is the pattern that we bring with us into recovery. Most of us come to recovery for survival reasons. We come to get, based on our need. We want to feel well. We long for attention and acceptance. We want the confusion in our head to go away. We want something to fill the boredom. We are desperate for the pain to be gone. We come because we want what others seem to have. One of the most difficult transitions for us is to move from the addiction to "getting" into a healthy life of "giving."

Jesus tell us: *Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.* (Luke 6, 2 Corinthians 9)

Most of us believe we have given more than we have received. In reality, much of our "giving" has been based on our own need for self-expression at the moment or our desire to influence (manipulate) some response from the individual. We "put up and shut up" because we are afraid and don't want to confront. We jump into a romantic relationship and "make love" to someone because our loneliness and our sexual urge is calling out. We share when we have, so we can expect to get back when we are in need. We are angry when that expectation goes

unmet. Much of our giving is still self-centered and is actually more about getting than giving.

Jesus models a new way of life for us based on unselfish giving. How did he do it? First, he surrendered His will to God at all times because He knew that obedience to God brings fullness of life. He knew His own needs would be completely met **only** as He gave His will and His life to God. We think people can meet our deepest needs and so we often give to them hoping to find satisfaction. It doesn't work. Only God can meet our deepest needs. So, day after day, Jesus gave Himself completely to God's will.

Second, Jesus gave to others out of a loving response to His Heavenly Father. Jesus lived ultimate security because his giving didn't require any response from people. Jesus gave to obey and please His Heavenly Father. His reward and satisfaction came from God's "Well done" compliment. We often feel dissatisfied and don't want to keep giving because individuals don't "respond in kind" or even show gratitude to us. Jesus shows us that to live free and to give freely is to do all for God and in response to God's gifts to us. Jesus knew God's essential character is generosity - generosity to all. God will generously reward us when we give. God's words and guidance to us will always express generosity, cutting through the mix of selfishness and co-dependence that so often colors our giving. As we follow God's will and give according to His plan, we will find deeper levels of joy and satisfaction than we have ever known.

In order to get, we must give. Jesus said, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* Which urge will set the tone of our lives? *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself. Seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* (Luke 10, Matthew 6)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways has my giving been clouded by a desire to get?
2. What needs to change in order for me to live and give as Jesus did?