



"There is a myth that those who do humanitarian work have a saviour mentality, but the relationship is reciprocal."

—Meghan Markle

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Reciprocity (Part One)

The notes on [Luke 6:38](#) in the *New Spirit- Filled Life Study Bible* read:

There is a universal law of divine reciprocity. You give; [God](#) gives in return. When you plant a seed, the ground yields a harvest. That is a reciprocal relationship. The ground can only give to you as you give to the ground. You put money in the bank, and the bank returns interest. That is reciprocity.

We are all probably familiar with the word "reciprocity," but a dictionary definition might still help. *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary* defines it as a "mutual action and reaction." It derives from a Latin word, *reciprocus*, that means "moving backward and forward."

In a recent YouTube video by Scott Adams, the author of the syndicated cartoon, *Dilbert*, he related a story about an 18-year-old African-American man from Buffalo, New York. Watching the news after the recent protests in his hometown, the teen-aged Antonio Gwynn, Jr., saw the extent of the

debris left over by looters. Glass and trash littered the streets, so on his own, he got started early, collected some cleaning supplies, and began sweeping and cleaning up some of the damage caused by the rioters.

Antonio spent ten hours serving his neighbors. Others who showed up later to help were pleasantly surprised that he had already done most of the back-breaking work himself.

Gwynn's story made its way to social media, and details of his selfless act eventually came to 27-year-old Matt Block. Scrolling through Gwynn's Facebook page, Block saw that the young man had earlier asked for advice about buying a car. Block decided to show his appreciation for what the young man had done by giving him his own 2004 Mustang Convertible. He had wanted to sell the car but felt that giving it to Gwynn was a better way to place it where it would truly be appreciated. Gwynn's late mother, who died in 2018, had driven an almost identical vehicle, making it one of the most meaningful gifts he could have received.

The story gets better. The law says that a person cannot drive a car without insurance, so a local insurance agent gave him a year's worth of insurance for free. And then, nearby Medaille College gave him a full scholarship to study business and mechanics. As Adams reflected, "They gave him a car, car insurance, and they paid for college [be]cause he spent ten hours sweeping the streets . . . and asking for nothing."

He added that, while the results may not always be so dramatic, reciprocity works every time. It works because, when we do something for someone without asking for anything in return, the recipients place themselves under an obligation. People feel compelled to return the favor.

The phenomenon has been studied and proven by noted psychologist Robert Cialdini. His research shows that, "if you do something for someone first, they are more likely to reciprocate. And, the 'favors' don't have to be equivalent—a small favor can beget a bigger return favor" (Roger Dooley, "[Reciprocity Power: A Study That May Shock You](#)"). It should not surprise us as it is a law that God has put into the very fabric of the universe.

[Galatians 6:9](#) reads, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest . . . if we do not give up" (*New International Version*).

Lord Robert Edmiston, founder of Christian Vision, writes:

[Luke 6:38](#) [*English Standard Version* throughout quotation] says, "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over . . . For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." Here again is a reciprocal benefit.

[Proverbs 11:24](#) says, "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want." Reciprocity.

Galatians (*sic*) 6:7-8: "God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Reciprocity.

It is a principle. Don't ask me how it works, but it does.

Lord Edmiston may not know how it works, but we know it works because God has created it to act as a universal law. It is like a spiritual version of Newton's Third Law of Motion: "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." We see it in many other scriptures as well, like [Ecclesiastes 11:1](#): "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days," and [Acts 20:35](#), "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

God's way is the way of give, and true giving always receives an equitable return. Even God expects a return on His investments in us. We should take time to reflect on how much He has done for us and then consider what we can do in return.

We know that He is faithful in providing for us and in rewarding us exponentially for the good we do, as [Luke 6:38](#) promises. But we need to dig

deeper, to contemplate what the apostle Paul writes in [Ephesians 4:32](#), "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you."

Paul's closing phrase gently reminds us that Christians literally owe Him for everything. Not only has God created [the world](#) and all else besides—for our benefit—but He initiated the relationship with us, calling us to Him when we were going on our merry way, oblivious to Him and His purposes. Then, He gave His Son as [payment for our sins](#) and gave us a new life in the Spirit. He has been in us ever since, guiding and directing our steps toward the [Kingdom of God](#).

So, how can we repay God for all He has done? Another way of asking the question is, "What can you give to someone who has everything?" In Part Two, we will consider what our reciprocal response to God's [goodness](#) toward us needs to be.

- John Reiss

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[God's Way of Give at the Feast of Tabernacles](#)

by Staff

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