



"The Christian is a person who makes it easy for others to believe in God."

—Robert Murray M'Cheyne

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Reciprocity (Part Two)

Part One explained the principle of reciprocity, in which [kindness](#) and service are rewarded with blessings, especially when the person expects nothing in return. In fact, [God](#) seems to have embedded this principle as a universal law—it is part of His way of give.

God expects us to learn this law and partake in it, as He Himself practices it abundantly in the lives of His children. So, how can we reflect it in our dealings with Him? How can we respond to His favor and gifts? What can we give Him despite His owning everything? It is not possible to repay what our Father and Elder Brother have done for us, but there are ways we can seek to reciprocate to Them.

First—and perhaps obviously in terms of repayment—*give thoughtful offerings*. The Bible instructs us, when making an offering, to evaluate what God has blessed us with ([Deuteronomy 16:17](#)). In our assessment, we place value on those blessings based on our appreciation of what He has already done. Some have taught that we should first pray and meditate on our offering, then set aside a certain amount of each paycheck to have our offerings ready when the annual [holy days](#) come around.

The apostle Paul writes in [II Corinthians 9:6-7](#):

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

Second, *share with the brethren*. Our sharing could be giving financial help. It could be more practical, like preparing a meal. It could also be taking the time to listen and talk, offering concern, assistance, or advice, if asked. It could even be as simple as providing a tip to make another's prayer- or study-life easier or sending them the URL of a helpful video.

In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats ([Matthew 25:31-46](#)), Jesus illustrates that He will reward His servants' kindness to others in the Body as if they had rendered the service to Him personally. God will even reward our reciprocity!

Third, *spend time in prayer, study, and meditation with God*. He is our loving Father. One of a parent's primary obligations is to educate his or her children, so in gratitude, we should strive to be God's best students possible. Get to know Him, how He lives, and what He likes and dislikes, and learn to imitate how He responds in different situations. We will understand and become skilled in these things only if we spend quality time with Him.

In his first epistle, Peter advises us, "[A]lways be ready to give a defense [*an answer*, KJV] to everyone who asks" why we believe what we believe ([I Peter 3:15](#)). He closes his second letter with a command to "grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior [Jesus Christ](#)" ([II Peter 3:18](#)). We should learn to provide a thorough explanation of why we [love](#) Him, giving God a good return on the investment that He has made in us.

He is training us for positions as teachers in the [Kingdom of God](#), and in that vein, we can all learn from Paul's instructions to Timothy, a younger minister. He writes in [II Timothy 4:2](#) (*Contemporary English Version*), "[P]reach God's message. Do it willingly, even if it isn't the popular thing to do. You must correct people and point out their sins. But also cheer them up, and

when you instruct them, always be patient." While we may not have the spiritual authority as one of God's ministers, we can patiently teach and cheer our brethren as opportunities arise.

Fourth, *obey God's law*, which is an encapsulation of the way He lives. As we know, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. In other words, when we live or act as another does, we are paying him or her a genuine compliment. Our obedience to God—that is, living His way of life—shows our gratitude to Him and brings Him glory.

In [Matthew 5:16](#), Jesus charges His disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." We should set a good example before [the world](#) by our adherence to God's instruction in His Word, and we will simultaneously heap honor on Him.

Fifth, and finally, *be thankful*. God is the Giver of all good things ([James 1:17](#)), and we are learning to be just like Him. If we take the time to give thanks for what He has given us, a blessing often comes back to us.

But we should not only consider all the wonderful things God has done to make our lives easier or more comfortable. A writer at [Gotquestions.org](#) challenges us:

We are to be thankful not only for the things we like, but for the circumstances we don't like. When we purpose to thank God for everything that He allows to come into our lives, we keep bitterness at bay. We cannot be both thankful and bitter at the same time.

The words of former President John F. Kennedy provide excellent advice. "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

Another thing we should never forget is what the apostle John writes in [1 John 4:19](#): "We love Him because He first loved us." He began this cycle of love and blessing, and we need to be forever grateful that He extended His love to us.

Recall the etymology of "reciprocity": The Latin word *reciprocus* means "moving backward and forward." God was the one who acted first, and we need to place ourselves under the obligation to reciprocate, doing what we can to return some of His benevolence to Him.

- John Reiss

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From the Archives: Featured Article

[Quality Holy Day Offerings](#)

by Staff

We tend to forget how different holy days and their offerings were under the Old Covenant as compared to the New. However, the important part of giving offerings remains the same!

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