

# High Profile Giving

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When the time comes to give and help out, we have many options available to us. We could prepare a meal and deliver it to the person in need. We could give someone a phone call. We could take them out to dinner to cheer them up. We could write them a card. We could give them hours of our time where we sit and listen to their problems, and perhaps become their new best friend. We could say the perfect word of encouragement or give them just the right advice to get them through a difficult time.

I don't know about you but when I consider that list of options I always want to go for the big stuff. I want to be "that person" who made the entire meal. I want to be "that friend" who really came through and supported someone in a crisis. I want to be "that person" who had all the right answers and all the right advice to help someone work through conflict.

But a lot of times I can't be that all encompassing and all giving person. Perhaps at that particular moment I actually don't have the time or the means. After all, preparing an entire meal or giving hours and hours of emotional support does take time. Perhaps I find myself in a position where I have other responsibilities that I must fulfill. Just as it raises issues for a father to preach the world over yet neglect his own children, so it could be wrong for me, in a particular context, to come to someone's aide while neglecting my own responsibilities.

Does this give me the right to throw my hands up in the air and say "well, I guess I can't help this person"? Absolutely not. The appropriate response in this scenario is to give what one can. I may not have the time to prepare an entire meal. I may not have the resources or wherewithal to fix all of the issues someone may be experiencing. But I can certainly write someone a card, or at the very least, genuinely ask how they're doing. Instead of going for the big, showy, high-profile giving, I can opt for the small and humble gestures.

But when push comes to shove I don't come through with the small, humble gestures. When push comes to shove I begin to drag my feet. I start to think, "a small card isn't going to fix their problem," or, "giving a phone call probably won't even make a difference." When push comes to shove I start to think about how Suzy McGiverson made an entire meal and watched the children for a whole week. I think about the measly card I was going to give and I start to feel a little insecure, maybe even embarrassed. I may even resent the person in need for confronting me with this dilemma and these uncomfortable feelings in the first place. And slowly but surely I come to the conclusion that I'm just not even going to bother with this whole giving thing at all.

Such a conclusion is perhaps one of the most unloving and unkind things I can do to another human being. When I choose not to give based on that conclusion I'm saying to the would-be recipient, "if my giving doesn't have an impressive and measurable effect on you then you're not worth my giving." "If I don't get to 'feel' good about, if I don't get recognized on Facebook for it, if there's no personal glory in it for me then forget it." "If there's nothing in it for me, then I want no part in your need."

Beyond the sheer selfishness of such a thought process, these are not the examples we find in the scriptures.

The woman who gave “two small copper coins” in Luke 21:1-4 is by no means a glorious account. “Two small copper coins” is a very small amount of money that, in terms of numbers, is not going to make a difference. It wasn’t fun for her to give so little. It probably didn’t make her feel so great; in fact she probably experienced embarrassment. Yet despite the fact that there was no personal gain for her, she gave.

The account of the woman in Matthew 26:6-13 is also lacking in grandeur and warm fuzzy feelings. It is likely that it was awkward and uncomfortable for this woman to be around such important people. Verses 8-9 tell us she was even criticized for her actions. She didn’t get to “feel” good and she didn’t get to “feel” comfortable. But still this woman gave, as a matter of principle and as a matter of humility.

Of course the greatest example comes from Christ’s sacrifice. The gift given by his death on the cross was by no means glorious or beautiful. It was lowly and it was bloody. Jesus knew those who entered by the narrow gate would be few while those who entered by the wide gate would be many. In comparison to the broad swathe of humanity that would reject his giving, Jesus could have concluded that it “wouldn’t make a difference.” But on the cross Christ didn’t think to himself, “you know what? This is only going to help a few. And it sure hurts me a lot. I probably just won’t bother with this whole crucifixion deal.” He didn’t think that because that wasn’t the point. The point was to give freely and out of love.

When we look at the examples in the scriptures and consider their lowliness and their humility it becomes clear that the point of giving is not to make a difference. The point is that we give, regardless of the outcome or how it feels for us. The point is that we sacrifice of ourselves out of agape love for our brethren.