



Generosity Without Expectations

Ayouth group from a prosperous North American suburb volunteered to help a pastor serve meals in an inner-city soup kitchen. Before this experience, most of these young people had only seen homeless people through their car windows as they and their family happened to drive through a poor part of town.

It was just before Thanksgiving, and the young people served a hot meal of beans, turkey, mashed potatoes and yams to a long line of people. As they filed past these young people filling empty plates with generous servings, few of the homeless people made any eye contact with the young people who were serving the free meal, and only a few mumbled a “thank you.”

Then, after the meal was finished, and after all the impoverished people enjoyed a delicious meal, the young people from the prosperous suburb washed all the pots, pans and dishes. It was a long, hard day for the young people, and before their bus picked them up to take them home, the pastor sat them down and asked them about their impressions of their day of service.

The young people were exhausted. No one responded until finally one girl spoke up and said, “I really didn’t like being here—it made me uncomfortable. And then, after all our work, *I guess I would have liked the people we served to be a little more grateful.*”

The people she and her friends served were poorly dressed, some had not bathed for a long time and many of them smelled. Some of them seemed slightly deranged, or perhaps even high. They didn’t smile or act happy because they had

little to smile or be happy about.

The young lady was right—she and all her friends worked hard all day and they received little, if any, appreciation for their work.

Have you ever felt that way? Have you given expecting to be thanked in return, only to receive little or no recognition for what you have done?

That’s really the story of life, isn’t it? As husbands and wives, when we look back on our marriage we realize that not only did we fail to express our appreciation on many occasions, but we know there were many times when we were disappointed when our spouse failed to thank us.

How about parenting? If you expect your child will thank you for each and every act of selfless and sacrificial love you express toward them, then forget about becoming a parent. Don’t hold your breath—it will never happen, will it?

Let’s be fair—we didn’t express enough thanksgiving to our parents, and in turn, as the cycle of life continues, our children will not express all the gratitude we as parents hope for. But here’s the question—do we give thanks only as we receive a “thank you”? Is the purpose of giving to be gratified with the thankfulness of the person to whom we give?

What about generosity without expectations?

The grace of God is given, without any pay-back on our part. The grace of God is lavished on us even though God is fully aware we are incapable of realizing the implications of his grace and responding in kind. ***God’s grace is generosity without expectations.***

This dynamic is the reason that

so many people don’t get God’s grace to begin with. When they hear that God does not love in direct proportion to obedience, then many assume that if grace describes God he is setting himself up for disappointment.

After all, if there are no conditions to God’s love and grace, what’s to stop human beings from taking and taking and receiving and receiving—without ever truly deserving God’s grace and without ever truly giving God the thanksgiving he deserves?

Indeed, that’s what *unconditional love* means. It means that God’s love and grace just keeps coming, because that’s his nature—his generosity does not come with strings attached, his generosity does not stop if and when people fail to appropriately give him thanks.

Giving with expectation of a return of some kind is not grace—it’s a business proposition.

On our part, generosity without expectations means that our giving—our service—should not be measured in exact proportion to gratitude we receive. We don’t treat others with respect and generosity only when we have a reasonable expectation they will return our kindness and gifts, but rather, we love others indiscriminately.

If we are truly in Christ and he is in us, then we will live lives of ***generosity without expectations.*** □

—Greg Albrecht

Join us for the complete message “Grace Without Expectations” at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of November 19, 2017.