

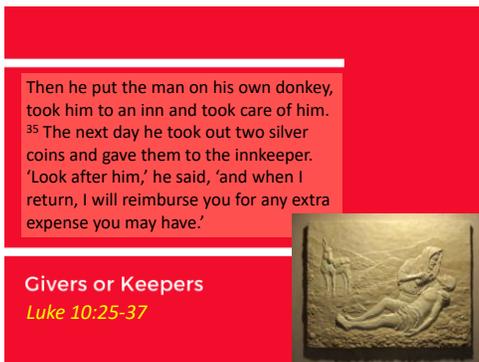
The Jericho Road: *Givers versus keepers?*

Luke 10:25-37

By pastor Ken Keyte

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Before I start I'd like to reassure you that there'll be *no bombshell announcements* at the *end of the service* like there was last Sunday!

And if you're *wondering how Raewyn and Ashley and I* are doing, it's been a *really tough week*, but *God is good* and we're *doing OK considering!*

This morning I'm continuing the series on *The Jericho Road* that's aimed at *helping us with the fourth of our five emphases* for the year: *Unconditional, inclusive love for others.*

But the parable of the Good Samaritan is going to help us with this morning also touches on the *fifth of our five emphases: Self Discipline- what's ours to do what's not* - particularly when it comes to giving our *time, money and resources* for *helping the poor and the needy.*

You all know *the parable of the Good Samaritan* very well, so I'm *not going to read it to you again,*

but I am going to *zero in on the last couple of lines* of the story. After administering first aid to the injured traveler lying on the side of Jericho Rd.

Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

The parable of the Good Samaritan exposes *the Priest and the Levite* who *ignored the injured traveler* on the side of the road as *"keepers"* and reveals *the Samaritan* as a *"giver"*.

Which is what I want to *talk about today.*

"Givers" versus "Keepers"

so we can ask ourselves (me included) which are more like? A *"Giver"* or a *"Keeper"*.

Timothy Keller, in his book *Ministries of Mercy, The Call of the Jericho Road* proposes *three guidelines* that emerge from the *Parable of the Good Samaritan.*

I've turned them into three comparisons for determining whether we are more of a *"Giver"* or more of a *"Keeper"* with the way we live. And in presenting these to you, I fully realise that I must do the same.

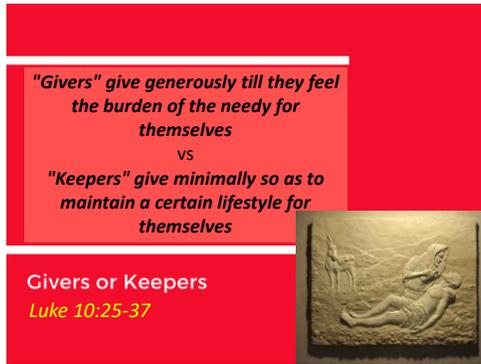
So here's the first comparison between *"Givers"* and *"Keepers"*.

"Givers" give generously till they feel the burden of the needy for themselves

versus

"Keepers" give minimally so as to maintain a certain lifestyle for themselves.

2



I'm pretty sure that the *religious law expert*, that Jesus told the parable to, would've seen *himself* as a "Giver".

As someone who faithfully upheld the Torah laws about giving to the needy.

He gave a tenth of his earnings to the LORD as per Leviticus 27:30, 32, some of which was used to help the widows and the poor.

Lev 27:30 "A **tithe** of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

Lev 27:32 The entire **tithe** of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod—will be holy to the LORD.

If he was a landowner he would also have practiced Leviticus 19:9-10 and left the edges of his field at harvest time, so that the poor and the immigrants could gather the gleanings.

As a *Torah abiding follower of Yahweh*, the law expert viewed himself as a "Giver".

But by answering his question, "*Who is my neighbour?*" with the *parable of the Good Samaritan*, Jesus showed him there was *more to loving your neighbour as yourself*, than just *keeping these laws!*

Take a look at *what the Samaritan did* to help the injured traveler.

Firstly, by *stopping to help him* on a *dangerous highway* notorious for thieves, he was putting himself *in harms way to help him*.

Secondly by *interrupting his schedule* to take him to an inn and care for him overnight, he *gave up his time* and his *personal agenda to help the injured man*.

And Thirdly, by giving *two silver coins to the inn keeper* to cover the costs and promising to *return later to reimburse any extra expense*, he *gave up some of his wealth to help the man*.

The Samaritan generously gave up his *security, his time* and *personal agenda*, and *some of his wealth* to help the injured traveler.

In doing so he *felt the burden of the needy man* for *himself*.

Which characterises him as a "Giver" because "*Givers*" give *generously till they feel the burden of the needy for themselves*.

The *Priest*, the Levite, on the other hand, did *none of the above!* They fit the mould of a "Keeper".

Stopping to help the wounded man, while on their way to the temple in Jerusalem, risking making themselves *ceremonially unclean* as per Jewish law, if the *man had died* then they wouldn't have been able to *do their temple duties* until they'd been *ceremonially cleansed*.

They also might've *missed* whatever they were going to, presumably a *temple ceremony*, which must've been a higher *priority* for them, than *helping an injured man*.

And perhaps they *excused themselves* on the grounds of *having insufficient disposable income* to help the man, *wasn't that what the temple benevolent fund was for, rather than coming out of their own pocket!*

Bottom line?

The Priest and the Levite fit the mould of a "Keeper" because "Keepers" *give minimally so as to maintain a certain lifestyle for themselves.*

The typical giving model for evangelical Christians is an *updated version of the Leviticus 19 tithing law:* give a tenth of your income to the church.

But is *that alone*, enable us to *feel the burden of the needy for ourselves*, along the lines of *how the Good Samaritan gave to help the injured man?*

You see *the tithe* was only ever meant to be given as *an act of worship* in gratitude to God who provides everything we have.

Whereas giving to the point where we *feel the burden of the needy for ourselves, that's what the Good Samaritan did!*

Let's have a look at a *couple of famous people who gave well beyond the tithe* to the point where they *felt the burden of the needy for themselves.*

John Newton, the former slave trader who became a pastor, a hymn writer and an antislavery activist, who wrote Amazing Grace, he advocated two guidelines for giving to help the needy.

First, choose a standard of living that is "barely decent", the "plainest necessities of life", without (what he calls) "conveniences" and "elegancies".

Above that, spend a penny on the poor for every penny we spend on ourselves.

In other words he advocated giving away half of our disposable income to the poor!

Second, Newton discouraged Christians from showing hospitality or entertaining of friends who were not poor. Why? Because in Luke 14:12-14 Jesus commands us to feed and house strangers and the poor in our own home. Newton preached and practiced taking the money you would ordinarily spend on entertainment and recreation with friends and instead use it for ministering to the poor.

John Wesley is another who practiced an even greater degree of sacrificial generosity to the poor. When he died, his estate consisted of a coat and two silver teaspoons, despite earning as much as 1400 pounds per year through the sale of his sermons and books.

This was because he never spent more than 30 pounds a year on his living.

He once famously wrote, "If I leave behind 10 pounds, you and all mankind bear witness against me that I lived and died a thief and a robber!"

So which is more characteristic of you you? A "Giver" or a "Keeper"?

"Givers" give generously till they feel the burden of the needy for themselves.

Whereas-

"Keepers" give minimally so as to maintain a certain lifestyle for themselves.

Much as I'd like to regard myself as a *generous "Giver"*, in light of the Good Samaritan, my giving is more like with that of a *"Keeper"* than a *"Giver"*, *how about you?*

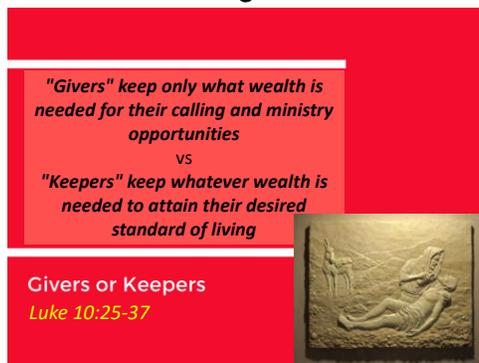
Here's the *second comparison* between a *"Giver"* and a *"Keeper"*

"Givers" keep only what wealth is needed for their calling and ministry opportunities.

versus

"Keepers" keep whatever wealth is needed for their desired standard of living.

3



Scripture tells us that *"mercy", "helps", "generosity" and "service"*, are listed among the *spiritual gifts*.

Some people have these *special gifts* and a *calling to match* for working with *the poor, the needy, the sick, the addicts, the elderly, the handicapped, the homeless* at great personal cost.

But we need to be careful *not to fall into the trap of using our lack of these giftings and calling as an excuse for not helping the poor.*

On the *other hand* we shouldn't *feel guilty* when we read about *missionaries and Christian workers* who have *poured their life out* in ministering among the poor.

Only *some are gifted and called* to live and minister this way, and those of us *who aren't* shouldn't *feel guilty about it!*

God has *called us* and *gifted us* to serve him in different ways.

Yet *John Newton*, and *John Wesley* and *Timothy Keller* would say, in light of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, *every Christian family* should have its *own ministry of mercy* to the *poor and needy!*

Then when we begin *reaching out to the poor*, we may discover a *gifting and calling* we hadn't perceived *before!*

Timothy Keller recommends three *checkpoints* for determining whether God is *calling you to a special ministry of some kind*.

1. Do you have a desire to do it?
2. Do you have an ability to do it?
3. Do you have an opportunity to do it?

Only when these *three checkpoints agree* is there a *call to a special ministry*.

A few years ago I had opportunity to go down to *Spreydon Baptist church* and observe some of their *mercy ministries*. One of them stood out to me in particular.

A group of families had become *so inspired by what they read in Luke's gospel* about *helping the poor* that they decided to *radically change how they'd been living* so they could *do more to help the poor*.

So they *sold their homes in middle class suburbs* and bought houses in *Addington*, which is one of the *poorest suburbs* in Christchurch.

They also *bought a shop* that they *turned into a cafe* called the *Addington Coffee Co-op* which *returns 70% of the profits* it makes *back into the community*.

- Did these families have a desire to do it? *Yes*
- Did they have an ability to do it? *I don't think any of them had run a cafe before but between them they had business skills and a willingness to learn.*
- Did they have opportunity to do it? *After exploring various options they did!*

A *yes to all three* of these checkpoints is an *affirmative to their call*.

These *three checkpoints* are worth *keeping in mind* as you explore the question- *what has God called you to do?*

For *Raewyn and I*, suddenly finding ourselves thrust into the unknown of where and what God wants for us next, these three checkpoints are important for us as we seek God's calling for what next.

I think the *Spreydon Baptist families* who've moved to *Addington* to live in a poor and work in a cafe that returns 70% of its profits to the community, are great examples of *givers!*

"Givers" keep only what wealth is needed for their calling and ministry opportunities.

Whereas-

"Keepers" keep whatever wealth is needed to attain their desired standard of living.

Which one best characterises you? A "Giver" or a "Keeper"?

Here's the *third and final comparison* between a "Giver" and a "Keeper."

Givers are careful not to be over-generous to the point their family becomes a liability to others.

versus

Keepers cautiously minimise their generosity so their family always has the best!

4

Givers are careful not to be over-generous to the point their family becomes a liability to others.
vs
Keepers cautiously minimise their generosity so their family always has the best

Givers or Keepers
Luke 10:25-37

Jesus doesn't tell us why the Good Samaritan left the injured man at the inn but would return sometime later to reimburse any extra costs.

Probably the Samaritan had a job and a family that couldn't be neglected. Imagine what might've happened if he'd stayed with the injured man till he was fully recovered from his wounds?

The Samaritan might not have had a job or a family to return to if his generosity had extended as far as that!

So it appears there were *limits to the Samaritans giving* for the injured man.

And quite likely these limits were so that his family would not become a liability to others, as per the *third characteristic* of a "Giver".

But what say the Good Samaritan had acted differently?

What if he'd been concerned that if he stayed the night with the injured man his family would miss him?

And that if he returned to pick up the bill once the man was well enough, his family might not be able to travel to Jerusalem for the Passover that year?

If he'd cautiously minimised his generosity so that his family always had the best, then he'd have been unlikely to give the inn keeper two pieces of silver to cover the costs of looking after the injured man.

As I've been preparing this message I've been examining myself against these three checkpoints too and asking myself, which am I?

A "Giver" like the Good Samaritan

or a "Keeper" like the Law Expert probably was?

As I thought about this *third checkpoint*, I tried thinking of an instance when I might have displayed this kind of giving that's careful not to give to the point my family could become a liability to others yet wasn't minimising my generosity so that my family always had the best.

I had to think long and hard about it!

But I eventually came up with *this!*

Several homeless people have been using the church showers over the last 12 months or so. One guy has come occasionally to church with his kids. Turned out they'd had to move out of the house they'd been renting when it was sold. Ever since then he's been living in his van while his partner and 2 young kids lived with her family in Te Puke. But he wasn't allowed to stay with them because her parents didn't like him. He had a job in a kiwifruit thinning gang.

They were desperately looking for an affordable house to rent.

But nothing suitable was coming up.

Finally a housing NZ house came through for them in Whakatane.

Only problem was his car didn't have a tow bar car and wasn't big enough to transport their household items to Whakatane.

So he asked at the church office whether there was someone with a big enough car willing to swap his car with theirs so he could get their gear across to their new house. My first thought was who in the church has a suitable car to swap with his?

But then I realised there was no good reason why I shouldn't lend him our van.

But what if he didn't return it? What if he crashed it?

These thoughts were going through my mind as I weighed up whether to lend him our van.

Turned out it wasn't just one trip he needed to do to Whakatane but *three trips* because he couldn't get a trailer! But he returned the van safely and he was very grateful for the use of it.

And with his kids all back in their car when we'd swapped our vehicles back, I said a prayed God would keep them safe and well in Whakatane.

Whereas-

"Keepers" give minimally so as to maintain a certain lifestyle for themselves.

"Givers" keep only what wealth is needed for their calling and ministry opportunities.

Whereas-

"Keepers" keep whatever wealth is needed to attain their desired standard of living.

Givers are careful not to be over-generous to the point their family becomes a liability to others.

Whereas-

Keepers cautiously minimise their generosity so their family always has the best!

You may well have *better examples* of when you've been a "Giver" that's careful not to be *over generous* to the point your family becomes a *liability to others*.

And I hope you've thought of examples more quickly than me, lest we be characterised as a "keeper" *cautiously minimising our generosity so our family always has the best!*

So which are you? A "Giver" like the good Samaritan or a "Keeper"?

"Givers" give generously till they feel the burden of the needy for themselves