

Blessing in Giving — Week 4

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In these tough times, we cut out the extras and downsize our expenses to fit our budget. Because of that, it would be easy to become more concerned about our own needs than the needs of others.

Elisha met with a group of prophets routinely. *There was a famine in that region* (2 Kings 4:38, *NIV*). It wasn't easy for him to supply meals for the group during that time of famine. However, a man brought twenty loaves of baked barley bread and gave it to the man of God. Elisha's servant questioned if it was enough to feed the hundred people; but Elisha instructed his servant, *Give it to the people to eat. . . . They will eat and have some left over* (2 Kings 4:43). He might have said, "Put aside two loaves for us for tomorrow," but he didn't. He was gracious in dire times. The prophet had confidence that God would supply his needs if he shared with others.

When we moved to Tennessee, I got a job because my husband was no longer able to work. We barely had enough to get by, but I felt impressed to bag up some groceries for a young couple with a baby. They were struggling financially, but never asked for anything.

I grabbed two brown paper grocery bags and scavenged through my pantry. I bagged three cans of vegetables, some soups, and a couple boxes of pasta. We could get along without the small turkey in the freezer, so I double bagged that. A boxed brownie mix and some odds and ends filled up the bags.

I usually stocked a bulging pantry, a carry-over from my childhood days. My dad stored peanut butter, jelly, cereal, and vegetables for lean times. As far as food, we five children never knew want, because Dad made sure our pantry shelves were full.

When I sent the bags of groceries with a friend to the young couple, I remembered a time several years ago. My husband was in bed with pneumonia and missed work for three weeks. Both our sons came down with bronchitis, and then I became ill.

After Bill was better, he and our daughter, Kim, attended church one Sunday. The rest of us were still sick. When they approached our little blue Volkswagen after church, they noticed that someone had placed three full grocery bags on the back seat of the car. The love of people we hadn't known long blessed us as much as the food they provided.

Now it was our turn.

A couple of years after I sent the groceries to the young couple, I attended a young-adult home Bible study, hosted by a friend. The young lady we'd sent groceries to commented on our lesson. Then she said, "I just want you guys to know something. Recently, I felt that I needed to give some groceries to someone in need. It was such a blessing to give. You just don't know how great it was to give to them!"

She wasn't at that moment thinking of how much she had blessed them, but of the *blessing contained in the act of giving*. Whether we have plenty or not, we can find ways to bless others who are in need as God nudges us to share.

Even if we continue to experience dismal financial times, let's not forget that God is our source and that He often gives us enough to pass some along to others. He wants us to experience the blessing that can be ours through giving.