

**Quick Backdrop**

You probably know the adage: *It's more blessed to give than to receive.* But where did this come from? Is it simply an adage? Did Jesus say it? Or is it one of those phrases like "May the Force be with you" that sounds scriptural, but isn't?

Well, let's dig in a bit. And as we dig, you'll see that this phrase is like one of those images that change on you as you pull back, revealing a completely different picture as the perspective changes.

**1 Digging In (God, Show Me!)**

First, let's check out the source of this phrase, going back to the moment it was first used. Read the Acts passage below and note a couple things as you read:

- **Who are the people in this scene?**
- **What places are mentioned?**
- **What's being said?**



**Acts 20:16-18; 22-23; 32-36 (NIV)**

<sup>16</sup> Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

<sup>17</sup> From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. <sup>18</sup> When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia.

<sup>22</sup> "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. <sup>23</sup> I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

<sup>32</sup> "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. <sup>35</sup> In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

<sup>36</sup> When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed.

Now a few basic questions:

**What's going on in this scene? What's the setting for the use of the phrase "It is more blessed to give than to receive"?**

**Who actually said the phrase in this passage? Who actually said the phrase originally?**

**What point was Paul making when he used the give-receive phrase?**

By the way, if you try to find Jesus saying this phrase in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John (the gospels, the books that tell us about Jesus' ministry), you won't find it. We don't have a record of Jesus saying these words. And that's okay. John notes in his gospel that Jesus did many other things that aren't written down (John 20:30-31).

**2 Taking It Inward (God, Teach Me!)**

Go back to the point Paul was making when he quoted Jesus' words about giving and receiving. What group of people was he most concerned about helping?

When Paul's listeners heard him mention the "weak," they would have pictured the poor, the sick, the destitute, and those who are unable to care for themselves. Who in your life might fit the description of "weak" as it was used in this passage?

**3 PUTTING INTO PRACTICE (God, Change Me!)**

You may have noticed that Paul rearranged his life (Acts 20:34) so that people did not have to take care of him, freeing up resources to help the weak. Paul lived a lifestyle that helped him and others be givers, not receivers. But what about your lifestyle? Are you more of a giver or receiver? And what changes can you make to free yourself up to be more of a giver? Write a note to yourself for each category below that answers these questions:

- **Are you more of a giver or receiver regarding this category?**
- **What can you change to be more of a giver than a receiver?**

**Friendships**

**The "Weak" (poor, sick, destitute)**

**Family Relationships**

**Co-Workers or Classmates**

Fold or Cut

