

20 Characteristics of the Giver

Of all the seven motivational gifts, this is the one least likely to be identified by the one who has it. Part of the reason may be that the giver's "left hand" does not know when his "right hand" gives alms (see Matthew 6:3). Another may be the giver's "all-around" personality.

The giver shares several traits of the server, can be a leader or a follower and has a love for the Word of God like the perceiver and the teacher. But when it comes to the use of resources, the giver is unique.

The Greek word is *metadidomi* (distinct from *didomi*, "to give") meaning "to give over, share or impart." It is to be done with *haplotetes*- simplicity, sincerity and liberality.

1. Gives freely of money, possessions, time, energy and love.

Notice that givers give far more than just money. If they have money, they will give generously of it, but they also give of anything else they possess. They give comprehensively. They give with abandonment. And, in the more mature stages of givers' lives, they give with absolutely no strings attached and no ulterior motives. They simply become channels for the Lord to use for the distribution of His resources, for they are convinced everything belongs to Him.

2. Loves to give without others knowing about it.

Jesus had a lot to say about not broadcasting our good deeds.

“Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them.... So, when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets.... Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:1, 2-4, NIV). Giving is to be secret.

Givers do not want acclaim or credit. They just want to please their heavenly Father. That joy is reward enough for them. Often, they will go to great lengths to assure that others do not find out about their gifts.

3. Wants to feel a part of the ministries to which he or she contributes.

Givers give to ministries that they believe in- ones that are effectively sharing the Gospel. Therefore, they not only give monetarily, but they also get involved in other ways. They will pray for the ministry, write letters of encouragement, send “care” packages and sometimes show up in person to assist in the work.

4. Intercedes for needs and the salvation of souls.

Givers often keep lists of people who need to receive salvation. They will intercede faithfully until with joy they can check a name off the list. When you ask a group to pray for the salvation of your relative or neighbor, the givers will follow through on your request. Others may mean to, but soon forget. Not so the givers. Above all they want people to come into the Kingdom of God.

5. Feels delighted when his or her gift is an answer to specific prayer.

Since givers know that the highest and best use of their gift is when they are being led to give by the Holy Spirit, they are especially thrilled when someone says, “How did you know I needed this? It’s an answer to prayer.”

6. Wants gifts to be of high quality or craftsmanship.

When givers give they give the very best. They are generous, even lavish. They want their gifts to be the highest quality they can afford. If they cannot afford to buy a gift they will make one-with great thought-fulness and skill.

JoAnn had been attending the Tuesday morning Bible study at our home. She had noticed

7. Gives only by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

You can’t talk a mature giver into giving. They will resist pressure appeals. They give only as the Holy Spirit leads them.

8. Gives to support and bless others or to advance a ministry.

When givers select a ministry to advance with financial support they check it out thoroughly to be sure (1) it gets the Gospel out effectively, and (2) overhead and administrative expenses are not taking too much of a chunk out of the donations.

Sometimes the giver wants to be an anonymous source of blessing for those who have genuine needs.

9. Views hospitality as an opportunity to give.

Like the server, the giver loves to practice hospitality. Outwardly this characteristic looks the same for both. But the inner viewpoint differs. The server sees hospitality as a chance to serve; the giver sees it as an expression of giving.

10. Handles finances with wisdom and frugality.

Givers are good at handling money. The best, as a matter of fact. They’re careful, cautious, even a little tight with their own spending. They do not squander money.

11. Quickly volunteers to help where a need is seen.

Here’s another characteristic that the giver has in common with the server. The server, however, is apt to jump in first to meet a need while the giver comes alongside to help once someone else has identified the need.

Announce a church work party some Saturday and it will be the servers and the givers who show up with greatest enthusiasm. They’ll work all day and come back again if the job isn’t finished.

Ask for volunteers for any worthwhile cause and guess which gifts will respond first.

12. Seeks confirmation on the amount to give.

Steve Lightle shared with us that he and his wife, Judy, always pray about the amount of money they give above their basic tithe to others or other ministries. “We find that at least eighty percent of the time Judy and I feel we should give exactly the same amount,” Steve said. “It’s so good to have such confirmation.”

13. Has strong belief in tithing and in giving in addition to tithing.

The person with the motivational gift of giving would never think of withholding part of his or her tithe. That would be robbing God. Givers believe that everything they have—money, home, car and all the other possessions—belongs to the Lord. They see themselves as stewards of God’s resources. The tithe is only the foundational aspect of their giving. Givers give beyond that, often up to 20 or 30 percent of their income or more.

14. Focuses on sharing the Gospel.

Givers are naturally evangelistic. We’ve found that even as children (providing they knew the Lord themselves) givers attempted to lead other children to Jesus.

15. Believes God is the source of his or her supply.

Since, from the giver’s viewpoint, everything belongs to God, the Christian’s job is simply to distribute money and resources wherever He directs. Therefore, if the supply runs out (he or she reasons), it is God’s responsibility to replenish that supply. Meanwhile, the giver is content to get by with whatever he or she has or, as the case may be, has not. Like Paul, the giver knows how to be abased or to abound.

Givers love the Scripture: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, KJV). They have every confidence that if they are being obedient to God’s direction in their life, He will indeed take care of their needs.

There is a seeming paradox. On the one hand givers seem most capable of all the gifts of earning a good living, while at the same time they are the ones most likely to be led to “live by faith.”

16. Is very industrious with a tendency toward success.

Whatever givers touch seems to turn to gold. The endeavors they get involved in habitually succeed. True, givers are hard-working, but it’s more than that. We believe that God prospers givers so that they can (and they usually do) give even more to the work of the Gospel.

17. Has natural and effective business ability.

Givers are good at making money. Even as children they are drawn into “business.” They are the ones likely to open up a corner lemonade stand or go door-to-door distributing homemade “business cards” offering babysitting or lawn mowing or car washes.

Givers also learn to save money at an early age.

More than any other gift, the giver is the one most likely to start up his or her own business. These usually develop, grow well and become financially successful.

18. Likes to get the best value for the money spent.

Givers don't like to waste money. When they give, they give the best. But when it comes to spending money on themselves, they're frugal. They shop for bargains and sales. One giver said, "I never buy a garment for myself at full retail price. I check the sale racks or wait for post-season markdowns."

19. Is definitely not gullible.

We think God has supplied givers with this characteristic to protect them from those who would wrongly dissociate them from their money. They are not easily fooled. You can't pull the wool over their eyes.

This clear-eyed quality shows up in other areas besides finances.

20. Possesses both natural and God-given wisdom.

Givers are fair and objective. They are often wise beyond their years. We cannot help but think of King Solomon, a biblical giver who prayed for wisdom and received much. In 1 Kings 3:16- 28 we read that two women both claimed to be the mother of a surviving baby. After hearing their claims Solomon asked for a sword and gave the order to cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.

What an awful-sounding command! But it was wisdom indeed, for the true mother cried out to spare the child, while the mother of the dead child agreed: "Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!" (verse 26, NIV).

Solomon's command had elicited from the women the responses that enabled him to determine the facts. Note the concluding verse: "When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God" (verse 28, NIV).

5 Problems of the Giver

Quite frankly, we find that givers do not have significant problem areas as frequently as the other motivational gifts, but we do list below the five that occur occasionally. It seems that givers wrestle mainly with the types of problems that all of us have, such as being prideful or lukewarm in their faith.

1. May try to control how contributions are used.

While givers are generous, they can also give with strings attached. A classic example is the person who donates money for new church carpeting but wants to select the color personally. Or the person who gives to the organ fund but wants to head up the committee that selects it.

2. Tends to pressure others to give.

As do recipients of each of the other gifts, givers see theirs as of primary importance. They don't understand why others don't give as much as they do. And so, consciously or unconsciously, they can be a source of pressure.

3. May upset family and friends with unpredictable giving.

Since givers depend on the leading of the Holy Spirit, an observer may see neither rhyme nor reason for their pattern of giving. In fact, the seemingly capriciousness can be a source of irritation to loved ones.

4. Tends to spoil own children or other relatives.

Givers love to give so much that they can spoil their children, nieces, nephews or grandchildren.

5. May use financial giving to get out of other responsibilities.

Sometimes givers figure that if they provide the money they've done their part.

Jim loved to give, but he also loved to make money. He enjoyed his job and often worked overtime. When his church-which had met for years in an old school-announced plans to build, he contributed a very generous amount to the building fund. But when it came time to put up the structure with mostly volunteer labor, Jim was "too busy" to help.

He rationalized that he'd work overtime at his job on Saturdays during the project so he could make an additional contribution. But it wasn't long before the Holy Spirit brought him under conviction and he admitted to himself that it was simply that he preferred working at his office to physical labor. He repented.

When he showed up the next Saturday at the building site he found it was great fun working with the other men. He decided getting personally involved was an important part of giving, too.