

Equal, not the Same

READING

2 Corinthians 9

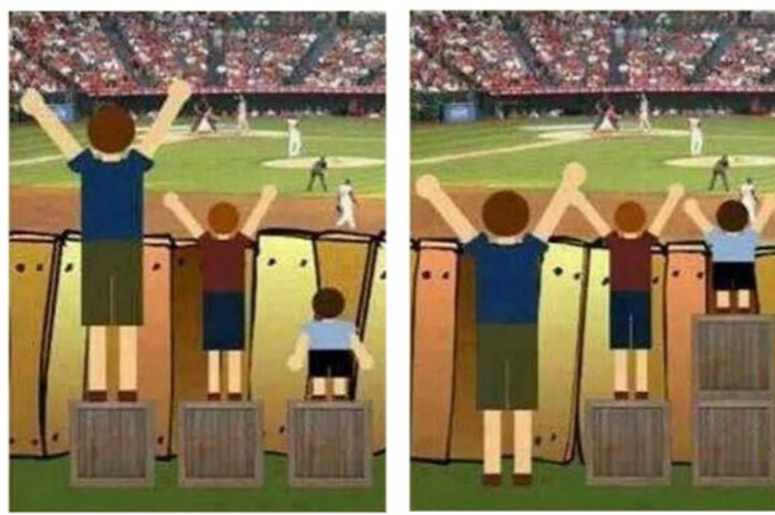
Matthew 6

James 2

Malachi 3

1 Corinthians 13

Time to compare another couple of images.
What do you see this time?



SAME

EQUAL

Equality is NOT “we all have the same”.

One of them is based on being right, on judgement, on self-righteousness, the other is based on love, on justice, on not thinking too highly of yourself.

The one on the left justifies itself with, “we all have the same”. It’s not my fault that other people can’t survive with what I have. It’s about valuing people by what they can achieve for themselves.

The one on the right is trying to bring justice to everyone. It’s trying to be loving. It requires sacrifice. It involves someone going without something. Maybe even going without something they earned, something they have every right to keep. But almost certainly, something they don’t really need.

It involves someone else getting more than they “deserve”.

But it’s about valuing everyone equally and being willing to put love into action to make that a reality.

Love requires sacrifice. It requires self-denial. It requires you being willing to be the one who is wronged. The one who goes without.

Usually this topic has been called “Giving”, but for Christians, instead of asking, “How much are you giving?” it is much more useful to have in mind, “How much are you keeping?”.

Christians are taught a lot about giving. Give in secret. Give cheerfully and not reluctantly. Give generously... I don’t think we struggle with understanding any of this. The only question I usually hear about giving is, “How much do I have to give?”.

The short answer is... zero. You don’t have to give anything.

The long answer is... zero. You don’t have anything to give.

Read carefully if you missed it. They’re different.

One of our modern Christian misconceptions is that we own things. Everything we have, all the stuff we think we own, all the income we receive, all of it, is not ours. It all belongs to God. God has simply given it to us to look after for him. We are stewards, not owners. A steward is someone who looks after someone else’s property or money on their behalf.

Get it? It’s all God’s money. We have just been entrusted with looking after some of it.

If you “get” this, it will change your whole attitude to giving. Instead of thinking of giving, you will think of keeping.

Of course God expects you to keep some of it to provide for your own needs, and those of your family. But even those considered generous amongst most modern Christians that I have talked with, keep 90% or more of what God has entrusted them with.

Now, before we get all high and mighty about that. Remember that each Christian should give what they have decided in their own heart. It’s not up to you to tell anyone else how much to keep. It’s not up to me either. It’s God’s money, if he thinks they are keeping too much he can deal with them himself.

But how about you? Do you think you are keeping too much? If God asked you to explain why you kept so much for yourself would you feel comfortable?

Do you feel like you are being generous?

One day Yeshua watched people giving at the temple. (In those days they had a big box for giving, and didn’t “pass the plate/bag” like we do now). The rich man made a big fuss about putting in 10% of his fortune. The poor widow humbly put in 2 small copper coins. But it was all she had to live on. Yeshua said that she gave much more. She put in about a 60th of a day’s pay, a few dollars. He put in what was probably equivalent to thousands of dollars. But she gave more. Because she only had a few dollars.

How much should you keep?

It depends on your situation - how much you have, and how much you need. Do you think you keeping more than you need to?

Ultimately, it depends on why you are keeping the amount you do.

Just like every action for Christians. It does not matter what you do. It matters why you do it.

Are you being generous? Or are you being selfish?

Are you cheerful about giving? Or are you struggling, and only giving begrudgingly because you love money?

Are you reluctant to give because you rely on money for your security instead of relying on God?

So, how much should you give?

Think about how much do you need to keep? And think about why.

Develop that attitude that it’s not your money. This will help you keep a loose hold on money, and give it a loose hold on you.

And then you will be free to give. You will be able to keep giving until you feel like you have been generous.

And then, you will be able to give cheerfully.

When you can give generously, cheerfully, without even keeping count, then you’re probably not keeping too much. When you can do that, you’re more focused on loving others than on being right about what percentage you are justified in keeping.

When you can do that, you’re giving in love.