

Study 13
“Giving & Receiving”
Philippians 4:10-23



Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Philippians 4:10-23 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

Beginning the Conversation

1. How do you find discussions around finances? Why do you think it is so difficult to talk about money? Share some of your experiences in the group.
2. Do you find it difficult to be content with what you have? What does this passage say about this?

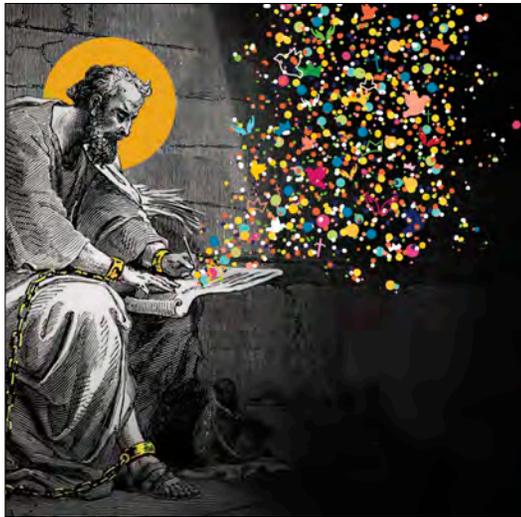
Digging Deeper

1. Paul wants to reframe our understanding of finances by seeing God in Christ as our Patron. Summarize some of the points from the sermon. Do you find this reframing helpful? Why?
2. Three “Big Ideas” from three often misunderstood passages were highlighted in the sermon: contentment, sufficiency in Christ, and God meeting our needs. These ideas are also interrelated. How do you understand each of these? Discuss.
3. How would you summarize the main themes of Paul’s letter to the Philippians? Work individually or in groups and fill out the chart below.

Themes	Mentioned in	Meaning/Significance
Joy		
Humility		
Unity		
Disposition/Posture /Attitude		

Living it Out

1. What are some of your takeaways from your study of the letter to the Philippians that will impact your day to day life?
2. Pick one of your answers from #1 above and make specific plans for how you can work on building it into your life with God’s help.



Giving & Receiving

Philippians 4:10-23

March 2, 2025
Pastor Tyler Williams
Greenfield Community Church



Giving & Receiving

Paul provides a theology of “giving & receiving” (4:15) while addressing the specific issue of their support.

- They supported Paul financially (4:15-16; cf. 1:4-5; 2:17, 30; 2Cor 8-9) but now he wanted to let them know he doesn’t need anything further.
- Navigating the complex reciprocity and patronage conventions in the honour/shame Roman culture.



Reciprocity & Patronage

Patron-Client Relationship?

- A hierarchical relationship with mutual obligations between a Patron and a lower status Client.
- Paul rarely if ever accepted patronage (1Thess 2:9; 1Cor 9:12; 2Cor 12:13; but Rom 16:2).

Patron
(Paul)

↕

Client
(Philippians)



Reciprocity & Patronage

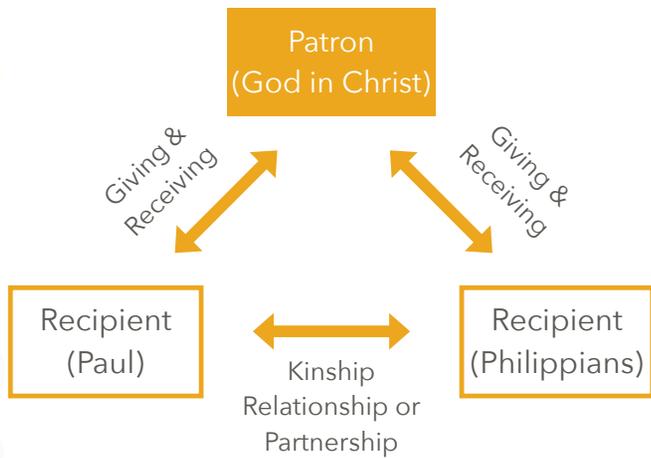
Recipient
(Paul)

↔

Recipient
(Philippians)

A Friendship/Parity Relationship?

- Yet, Roman reciprocity conventions dictate when given a gift, it is necessary to give one back.
- If one refuses or returns a gift it creates enmity.



Reciprocity & Patronage

God in Christ as Divine Patron

- God initiated the relationship in grace and love (Rom 5:6; Eph 2:8-9; John 3:16; 1Cor 6:20).
- Their gifts are understood as a gracious response to all that God in Christ has done/is doing for them (and they are "credited to their account"; 4:17; cf. 1Cor 3:14; Matt 6:20).
- Their gifts are ultimately offerings given to God, not Paul (4:18; cf. Lev 7:1-34; 19:5).



Reciprocity & Patronage

"God in Christ is in fact in a relationship of giving and receiving with the Philippians, and the Philippians need to realize who was the initiator and real benefactor in the relationship – namely God. It is not the Philippians, nor is it Paul, but rather God through Paul who began a good work in and for the Philippians and their salvation" (Witherington, *Philippians*, 280).



Reciprocity & Patronage

A Crucial Caveat!!

- Paul does NOT understand his relationship with God or the Philippians as primarily a transactional or contractual relationship!
- But he is talking about financial matters and in this context is framing the relationship using such metaphors.



Giving & Receiving

"I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that now, at last, you renewed your *thoughtful and loving disposition* towards me..." (4:10).

- Paul doesn't say "thank you", but reframes their gift giving by saying "I rejoiced greatly in the Lord."
- "Thoughtful and loving disposition" (*phroneo φρονεω*; 10x) - to develop a posture based on careful thought and consideration (similar in 1:7).



1. Contentment is God's Gift

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.... I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation..." (4:11-12).

- "Learned the secret" (*myeo μυεω*) - not natural, but something one learns (contrast what we learn).
- "Content" (*autarkes αυταρκης*) - being happy or content with what one has; not self-sufficient, but "God-sufficient."



2. Sufficiency is God's Gift

The "Superman" Verse



- "I can [do] all things through him who strengthens me" (4:13, NRSVue).
- Lit. "I am able [____] all things through him who strengthens me" (need to fill in the verb).
- "I can [face/cope with] all this through him who strengthens me" (4:13, TFW).



2. Sufficiency is God's Gift

This verse is NOT a promise that you can accomplish anything if you just draw on God's strength!

- Paul can thrive in want and plenty because he is strengthened by God to be truly content.
- "The only truly free and independent person is the person who paradoxically enough is dependent on the Lord for everything" (Witherington, 275).



3. Having Our Needs Met is God's Gift

"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus..." (4:19).

- Keep it in context of "giving and receiving" (4:15).
- Written to the community ("your" is plural).
- Talking about "needs", not "wants" (2:25, 4:16; Mat 6:8).
- God does not promise to satisfy our desire to be conspicuous consumers!



Invitation

As Christ followers our "considered disposition" matters!

- "In your relationships with one another, have the same considered disposition as Jesus the Messiah..." (2:5).