

When Does A Gift Become A Bribe?

How can we distinguish between what is a gift and what is a bribe?

Some gifts could even become a curse for the one who receives them!!

Proverbs 17:8 [Amplified Bible] *“A bribe is like a bright, precious stone that dazzles the eyes and affects the mind of him who gives it, as if by magic he prospers whichever way he turns.”*

The Hebrew word used for gift or bribe is never used for a “disinterested gift”.

Note something given as a bribe blinds the giver as well as perverting the receiver.

Proverbs 17:23 [Amplified Bible] *“A wicked man receives a bribe out of the bosom [in secret] to pervert the way of justice.”*

Receiving a gift as a prompt to using our influence to pervert justice makes us a wicked person as well as the one who gives it.

1 Samuel 8:3 [NIV] *“But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.”*

The sons of Samuel used the position of influence to accept bribes to pervert judgements in favour of those who came to them. Remember Samuel was one of the God-appointed judges of Israel.

Proverbs 18:16 [NIV] *“A gift opens the way for the giver and ushers him into the presence of the great.”*

The Hebrew word translated gift is a different word to that used in **Proverbs 17:8** and **23**. The word has a neutral meaning. In fact it is used for a sacrificial offering.

There is no mention of perversion or injustice when this word is used.

Many scriptures tell us to “walk with the wise” to seek their company and learn of their ways.

Bankrupt people became “slaves” of successful families to be in their company 24 hours a day to learn from them to be successful and then start their lives again at the end of 7 years training in wisdom. [**Deuteronomy 15:12-14**]

Such a gift to a wise [great] person acknowledges his position and allows the giver to learn from them.

In fact such a gift is a sign of courtesy acknowledging the person’s rank and authority.

Such a gift only turns into a bribe if done in secret and with a wrong intent.

Proverbs 21:14 [NIV] *“A gift given in secret soothes anger, and a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath.”*

This gift was given in secret but for a noble reason, to promote peace.

1 Samuel 25:14-28 [NIV] *“One of the servants told Nabal’s wife Abigail: “David sent messengers from the desert to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. Yet these men were very good to us. They did not ill-treat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding our sheep near them. Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our*

master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no-one can talk to him.” Abigail lost no time. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. Then she told her servants, “Go on ahead; I’ll follow you.” But she did not tell her husband Nabal. As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending towards her, and she met them. David had just said, “It’s been useless, all my watching over this fellow’s property in the desert so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!” When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said: “My lord, let the blame be on me alone. Please let your servant speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name, his name is Fool, and folly goes with him. But as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my master sent. “Now since the LORD has kept you, my master, from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, may your enemies and all who intend to harm my master be like Nabal. **And let this gift**, which your servant has brought to my master, be given to the men who follow you. Please forgive your servant’s offence, for the LORD will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the LORD’s battles. Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live.”

Abigail brought gifts to David to pacify his righteous anger at the foolish actions of Nabal her husband.

David recognised this wisdom of Abigail and when Nabal dies of heart failure after excessive drinking David took her to be his wife.

Wise move.

I look forward to meeting Abigail some day, and I would probably take a gift for her with me!!

We always must consider how the gift will be received before we give it, and be sure we are giving it out of love, not with the motive for gain.

Scripture encourages us to give generously to others.

I know of one elderly widow who would never let you leave her home before you had accepted a small gift from her, an apple, a sweet, a flower from her garden, or something similar.

For you to refuse this gift would really hurt her for it was a token of her love.

Luke 6:27-35 [NIV] “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. **And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that.** And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ lend to ‘sinners’, expecting to be repaid in full. **But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.** Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”

But we do this but always with wise balance.

Deuteronomy 15:7-11 [NIV] “If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your poor brother. Rather be open-handed and **freely lend him whatever he needs.** Be careful not to harbour this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will towards your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the LORD

against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed towards your brothers and towards the poor and needy in your land.”

We give to supply a need but not to detract from the person’s desire to become self-supporting.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 [NIV] *“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, **we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.** We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to **make ourselves a model for you to follow.** For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: **“If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”** We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ **to settle down and earn the bread they eat.** And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”*

Any gift could turn into a curse if given without wise forethought.

We provide all present needs and “*seed corn*” for the recipient of our gift to become self-supporting.

Using such wisdom makes our gift a blessing, not a curse.