

# EASIER TO GIVE THAN RECEIVE

by Ryan Lind

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## *Christ empties himself and God fills him. (Phillipians 2:5-11)*

A 21st Century Sistine Chapel painting would feature Adam shaking hands with God, both parties smiling having brokered a fair deal. No longing reach, no pained lack. The lovingkindness of God is not and never has been earned or negotiated. In our transactional world, our expressions of faith reflect our experience. Jewelers and other retailers, quoting Paul, tell us, “It is better to give than to receive.” That may be true, but in our age, I’d argue, it is merely easier to give than receive, not better.

There is a deep lesson to learn by receiving. Giving, particularly the unnecessary, winter gift-giving rituals that make so many of us crazy for a month or more each year, requires no humility. I’ll go further: often these are acts that satisfy the emotional needs of the giver more than the material needs or desires of the receiver. Yes, I am that stick in the mud. I’m not opposed to giving of course, but good giving is learned by the humility of

good receiving. Good receiving requires empty hands, maybe needy hands.

We are largely insulated from need, which is nice, except our needlessness robs us of learning and knowing our role in the divine experience—as recipient. Then our meager gifts might be transformed into reflections of God’s extravagance and maybe, maybe, the goodness of giving might compete with the goodness of receiving.

**GOD,  
I DO NOT HAVE THE COURAGE TO  
ASK FOR EMPTIER HANDS OR  
NEEDIER HANDS. A HUMBLER  
HEART, MAYBE I COULD TOLER-  
ATE THAT. CREATE IN ME ENOUGH  
SPACE FOR YOUR GOODNESS THAT I  
MIGHT PARTICIPATE IN SHARING IT.  
AMEN**