

# re:solutions – re:sponsive

Reconnect – January 23, 2011



**Text:** Proverbs 3:25-35; Luke 21:1-4

**Key Thought:** A transformed life resolves to help others, convinced that God will help them do it.

You need not be afraid of disaster or the destruction that comes upon the wicked, for the Lord is your security. He will keep your foot from being caught in a trap. Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it's in your power to help them. If you can help your neighbour now, don't say, "Come back tomorrow, and then I'll help you." (Proverbs 3: 25-28, NLT)

## Intro: Excuses for not "giving back"



**Bill Gates** – with Warren Buffett, challenging the mega-billionaires of the world to give away half their wealth to charity - and about half of them have been convinced – one who wasn't was the current richest man in the world, Carlos Slim Hélu – while he has worked to do some philanthropy, he isn't in favour of handing out handouts... (National Post article) but whatever the case, they are trying to do something good... "we save lives for under \$2000 per life" – where our society in the West will spend ten or a hundred times that, Gates is able to do it through his foundation for \$2000 or less

- But what do we tell ourselves when confronted with another request for a donation, another need, another request?

**Q: What gets in the way of you giving or helping someone else? What are the most popular excuses that we tell ourselves or make so that we don't have to? (greed/selfishness duo)**

- In a book of very practical advice, written primarily to those starting out their adult lives, Proverbs has something to say about “giving back” as well – lessons of living in close quarters, among people who know you your whole life – and it talks about some of these excuses, too

### **Read/Explain Text: Proverbs 3:25-35**

**You need not be afraid of disaster or the destruction that comes upon the wicked, for the Lord is your security. He will keep your foot from being caught in a trap.**

- We get worried that if we help others, we are going to be vulnerable – that we are “overexposed” when it comes to helping – that’s a financial term – it talks about risk, that if something shifts in the market, if something changes in the economy, and it can be slight, and it can be quick, that suddenly, everything is going to collapse, and the wheels are going to fall off
- You don’t want to be overexposed, because things can happen out of your control and hurt you – so you want to try to be in control, be wise, be prepared, show common sense – because one day
- But what if you were protected? What if it wasn’t about being overexposed, but about being able to use your leverage to the full? That’s another financial term – leverage is about putting what isn’t yours to work for you – there’s more risk, because it’s not yours – like borrowing to invest – tricky stuff! – but again, what if you were completely supported to risk more, and achieve more?
- we’re scared of helping others because we think that ultimately, one day we will suffer – the last slice of the pie will be gone, as if we were never enriched by anyone else or our giving would only ever be one way

**Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it’s in your power to help them. If you can help your neighbour now, don’t say, “Come back tomorrow, and then I’ll help you.” Do not plot against your neighbours, for they trust you. Don’t make accusations against someone who hasn’t wronged you.**

- “those who deserve it” – that can be a hangup, a nonstarter, right there – after all, do they REALLY deserve it? What have they done for you lately? When were they there for you? Or maybe they WERE there for you – but in what way? And does it justify what they are needing?
- The teacher is talking about people that you DO know – neighbours, people in your community, those you rub shoulders with, you know their names – we’re in a much more mobile society, where we didn’t grow up with the people around us, we don’t many times know them and they many times don’t really know us or our families or where we’ve come from – it’s one thing to help people you do know – it can be awkward, but there can be immediate benefits in terms of closer friendship, and you might see a difference because of what you did – but it’s another thing to go further than that and help people you DON’T really know – whether you are donating anonymously to someone else, or sending money around the world
- “when it’s in your power to help them” – many times we might think we DON’T have much power or ability to help – we’re not an expert on what is needed – like a doctor, or a builder, or a financial consultant – but we might know someone who is, and maybe our role is to be a connector, someone who helps with the so-important relational networking side of our lives – where again, because of our mobile society, we don’t know the people around us, and we don’t know who could help and who might WANT to help, so people don’t get helped

- what kind of power do you have? Do you have money? Well, we all do, even those who are low-income... so then the question becomes, what are you doing with it, and are you able to share even a little of it? Because every little bit matters – can't afford a Worldvision kid of your own? Get your neighbourhood in on it or your office in on it, where everyone kicks in a little bit and it gets done together – do you have the ability to gather people or energize them? Do you have the ability to talk something up? Or are you a good listener? Or someone who can create, like crafts or clothes, or can you cook, or bake? Or research, or pass along to others what you know?
- And then we go down the line, and it says, "Don't plot against your neighbours, don't make false accusations" – we think, what is this about and how does it fit with being responsive? And yet, it's about not causing problems that aren't there – and if you're not tearing the blanket, then it's keeping people warm – part of being responsive is not creating problems in the first place – because if you want to, you can turn your neighbourhood upside down, with drama, with what you do with your stuff – where you park your car, noise, the condition of your property, renovations – the list goes on and on of all the things we do to annoy each other when we're living in close proximity – and in our society as well – living an upright life is responsive because the fewer problems you create, the more you are helping to solve the rest of them

**Do not envy violent people; don't copy their ways. Such wicked people are an abomination to the LORD, but he offers his friendship to the godly. The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but his blessing is on the home of the upright. The LORD mocks at mockers, but he shows favour to the humble.**

- What is going to grab you for your life? How will you spend it? What will your life's cause be? What has it been up to this point? We don't often really look back on our lives very much – generally only if someone close to us dies – or if we get sick – or if we have to do a resume... what are you giving your life to, what have you given your life to so far... mid-life crisis – what if we had them and started giving back, rather than deciding to take instead? (mid-life crises... tired of responsibility, so they get ditched – spouse, kids, family, job, savings, discipline – for whatever else they "want") – Gates' video shows that even a "small" thing, unnoticed, without fanfare – can make a huge difference (rotovirus) – on kids surviving until they reach 5 – they use that measurement because once a child reaches five, they have a dramatically better chance at living into adulthood and having a life for themselves

**The wise inherit honour, but fools are put to shame! Proverbs 3:27-35**

- the last word of the teacher on this point – the conclusion of the matter – this is what they see having happened, this is what they see on the horizon

**\*\*Bill Gates can go in and do what he does – which is convince some of the richest people in the history of the world to give up half of their possessions or more to help the poor – because he believes in it completely, AND he can back up what he says with evidence and facts – he's passionate and it makes sense – so do we have that when it comes to what we're passionate about, and the life we're trying to live, and the help and good we're trying to give?**

**Responsive (greed/fear/selfishness) – giving of ourselves and our time and our resources, becoming someone who puts others first**

## What does it look like on a personal level?

- Making the most of what you have to reach out to others – not being afraid to do so, not growing weary in well doing – pushing on and gaining your strength from God – because if you don't have the strength, your attitude will fail and you will hate the people you're trying to help – so we all need God's help to keep our attention focused on what is important, on what is eternal, and give us the strength of His Spirit to do the work that needs to be done

## The OPPOSITE of responsive:

- fear/selfishness

## Responsive - value

- Here's what our website has to say about this value of responsive – which by the way is one of our shared Reconnect values:



## **Responsive: "Demonstrating God's love in Barrhaven and around the world by meeting needs - spiritual, physical and emotional - in creative and meaningful ways"**

### **Looks like: Engagement**

We will work to identify specific needs in our local community that we can meet through mobilizing our people and resources, rather than waiting for needs to be presented to us. Our goal is to be an "inside-out church" that engages people in their lives and needs, by doing what we can do, well, to help. To that end, our neighbourhood Living Rooms will be the environment where faith grows, leaders develop, and teams are built, in order to live out the love of God.

### **Looks like: Involvement**

There is a God-designed place here for anyone who is willing to make a valued contribution towards meeting needs, regardless of where they are at in their spiritual journey. Rather than merely being spectators or consumers, we want people to discover where they can make a difference and then, as part of a team that will provide support, accountability and synergy, begin to do so.

## **Responsive:**

- the Bible stubbornly maintains that having a relationship with God – a transforming, committed relationship that affects the rest of our lives – is the key to experiencing true success and joy in the rest of our lives – to "getting everything else right"

- Proverbs – 3x – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”
- No matter your degrees, or your IQ points, or your mad video game skillz, it comes down to having an ever-increasing space for God in your life – yikes!
- You can’t really be responsive without God – sure, you can be helpful and sacrifice – but what you show the rest of the world will be lacking, big time in the centre of YOU
- It takes **resolve** to be responsive before God – the sticky part of the word “resolution” – or re:resolution, as we’ve been saying... it takes being “resolute”

## Key Thought:

# TAKE IT HOME:

## A transformed life resolves to help others, convinced that God will help them do it.

While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins. “I tell you the truth,” Jesus said, “this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has.”



– Jesus in Luke 21:1-4, NLT

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## Conclusion: short-sighted? (J.C. Ryle)

- What can I do to help you serve God? Not just like the idea of Him... not just be open to Him... but to get you to give Him your all? To put your life in His hands?
- Intro: J.C. Ryle – bishop of Liverpool, England back roughly 150 years ago – passionate about true faith that made a difference in people’s lives, especially those who weren’t “churchy people” for church

**Ryle's questions: (from 100 years ago) (chapter 1 of Practical Holiness) – from 1878! (133 years ago)**

- 1) Do we ever think about our souls at all?**
- 2) Do we ever do anything about our souls?**
- 3) Are we trying to satisfy our consciences with a mere formal religion?**
- 4) Have we received the forgiveness of our sins?**
- 5) Do we know anything by experience of conversion to God?**
- 6) Do we know anything of practical Christian holiness?**
- 7) Do we know anything of enjoying the means of grace?**

When I speak of the means of grace, I have in my mind's eye five principal things – the reading of the Bible, private prayer, public worship, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the rest of the Lord's day. They are means which God has graciously appointed, in order to convey grace to man's heart by the Holy Ghost, or to keep up the spiritual life after it has begun. As long as the world stands, the estate of a man's soul will always depend greatly on the manner and spirit in which he uses means of grace. The *manner and spirit*, I say deliberately and of purpose. Many... attend to them as a matter of duty, but without a jot of feeling, interest, or affection. Yet even common sense might tell us that this formal, mechanical use of holy things, is utterly worthless and unprofitable... Tell me what a man does in the matter of Bible-reading and praying, in the matter of Sunday, public worship, and the Lord's Supper, and I will soon tell you what he is, and on which road he is travelling. How is it with ourselves? (J.C. Ryle, Practical Religion, 9-10)

**8) Do we ever try to do anything good in the world?**

There is a generation of professing Christians nowadays, who seem to know nothing of caring for their neighbours, and are wholly swallowed up in the concerns of number one, - that is, their own and their family's. They eat, and drink, and sleep, and dress, and work, and get money, and spend money, year after year; and whether others are happy or miserable, well or ill, converted or unconverted, travelling toward heaven or toward hell, appear to be questions about which they are supremely indifferent. Can this be right? ... The poorest man or woman, without a single penny to give, can always show his deep sympathy to the sick and sorrowful, and by simple good-nature and tender helpfulness, can lessen the misery and increase the comfort of somebody in this troubled world... Do we ever try to do any good to anyone beside our own friends and relatives, and our own party or cause? Are we living like disciples of Him who always "went about doing good," and commanded His disciples to take Him for their "example"? (J.C. Ryle, Practical Religion, 10-11)

**Response: prayer**