

Proverbs 3:27 (ESV) – “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.”

What Does This Verse Mean?

This verse from Proverbs offers both a moral and spiritual principle: we are not to withhold acts of kindness, generosity, or justice from those who have a rightful claim to them—*especially when we are capable of helping.*

There are two parts to this command:

1. “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due.”
2. “When it is in your power to do it.”

Let’s unpack these two elements in more detail.

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1. “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due”

The Hebrew phrase here literally implies, “*Do not hold back good from its owners.*” In other words, this “good” is not charity in the

modern sense, where the giver decides whether to give or not—it is a moral obligation. Some people have a rightful claim to our help.

Who are the people to whom good is due?

a) Biological Family

Scripture places primary responsibility on caring for our immediate families.

1 Timothy 5:8 (ESV) – “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

Neglecting one’s own family is seen as a betrayal of the Christian faith. Family care is not optional—it’s foundational to biblical responsibility. This includes:

- Elderly parents (see also Exodus 20:12 – “*Honor your father and your mother...*”)
- Children
- Siblings
- Spouse

When a family member is in need, *helping them is not just generous—it is just.*

b) Fellow Believers (The Household of Faith)

Galatians 6:10 (ESV) – “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Early Christian communities functioned almost like extended families. They shared their possessions and looked after each other’s needs (Acts 2:44–45). The Apostle John adds that failing to help a brother in need casts doubt on the genuineness of one’s faith:

1 John 3:17–18 (ESV) –
“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

This also includes:

- Widows in the church who meet the biblical qualifications (see 1 Timothy 5:3–10).
- Faithful ministers of the gospel who devote themselves to preaching and teaching (see 1 Corinthians 9:14 – *“The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.”*)

c) The Poor and Needy

The Bible consistently commands care for the poor, widows, orphans, and the oppressed.

Galatians 2:10 (ESV) – “Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.”

Helping the poor is not an act of superiority but of justice and mercy. God identifies Himself as a defender of the poor:

Proverbs 19:17 (ESV) – “Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.”

This includes:

- Homeless individuals
- Disabled persons
- Needy neighbors
- Strangers in need (see Deuteronomy 10:18-19)

2. “When it is in your power to do it”

This part of the verse introduces wisdom and boundaries. God does not expect us to give what we do not have. Generosity must be spirit-led and situationally wise.

2 Corinthians 8:12-13 (ESV) –

“For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened.”

Paul clarifies that giving should be based on one’s ability—not out of guilt or pressure. God honors the willing heart, not the amount.

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Balance is important:

- Don’t neglect your own household in an effort to help others.
- Don’t give beyond your means, unless the Spirit leads and your faith is strong enough to sustain it.
- Don’t ignore real needs just because you fear running out.

Luke 6:38 (ESV) – “Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap...”

The principle is this: God provides more to those who are faithful stewards, knowing they will channel blessings to others.

Theological Reflection

This proverb aligns with the biblical themes of justice, mercy, and stewardship. God is not simply calling us to be “nice people”—He is calling us to be agents of His righteousness on earth. Helping those “to whom it is due” reflects:

- God’s character – who is merciful and just.

- Kingdom living – where believers reflect heaven’s values on earth.
- Practical holiness – where love becomes action.

Conclusion

Proverbs 3:27 is not just a call to generosity—it’s a call to justice and responsibility.

Help those:

- You are biblically responsible for,
- Who are in genuine need,
- And when you have the means to do so.

Use wisdom, act from a willing heart, and remember that your help to others is ultimately service to God Himself.

Matthew 25:40 (ESV) – “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

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May the Lord bless you and make you a faithful steward of every good gift He has given you.

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