

## THE JOY OF GIVING

Some people don't know what they are missing. They go through life settling for second or third best or some spot way down the line. Let me illustrate. I was talking with the owner of a bicycle shop on one occasion and he was telling me the advantages of getting a really good bike from a reputable dealership. He told me that many families just buy a bike for their child for Christmas or birthday from a discount department store. The bike comes unassembled in a large box and must be put together by dad who may or may not have a knack for mechanics. He must install the handlebars, the peddles, the wheels, the brakes, the seat, and the gear shifting mechanism. Sometimes all this is attempted without even reading the directions!

Unfortunately that child may end up with a bike that "works" but nowhere near the potential designed by the manufacturer. You can just imagine how this bike may ride and look. Handlebars out of adjustment, peddle bearings too tight, wheels poorly aligned, brakes improperly set, the seat too high or too low, the gears not shifting quite right etc.

The same thing is true in the world of automobiles. The cheaper ones are just basic transportation - to get you from point "A" to point "B." The well built cars on the other hand are really a joy to drive because of the handling and performance.

Many people have terrible marriages because of their own selfishness. They don't seem to understand that when you treat your spouse kindly you generally get kindness and even love in return. And so again, instead of real happiness and satisfaction with a life companion many find their marriage a most galling yoke.

I believe that the same is true with sharing our resources - philanthropy, stewardship, estate planning - simply giving financial contributions to good causes and worthy people. We have all heard

stories of wealthy "bag ladies" or street people. On occasion I have read of people who have considerable assets yet choose to hoard money and live a very meager lifestyle. Oh sure, they may have a certain tinge of satisfaction once in a while when they count their money but nothing like the joy that comes to one who is personally involved in making a difference in the life of an individual or community.

Somehow a poor mental attitude or simply ignorance of the principle that it truly is more blessed to give than to receive causes a high percentage of people to ride through life on a bicycle that is a chore rather than a pleasure to ride. A quality life and a proper sense of self-worth are the rewards of getting involved in sharing with others. Studies have shown that people who act out of concern for others markedly improve their lives regardless of their own material circumstances. They lead more vigorous, balanced lives, are committed to other people and the environment, are hardly ever bored, and cope well with whatever comes their way.

A well tuned life includes a good measure of generosity. You don't know what your missing if you are not giving. Don't settle for second best.