

Stingy

To be stingy is to hoard your possessions, keep your checkbook hidden, and control those emotions that might lead to impulsive giving. Stinginess, like generosity, feeds on itself, and grows more unchangeable as it develops. One is at first simply trying to balance a budget, control spending within the family, and before too long this laudable desire has given way to tight-fistedness. One is not, of course, doomed to such a fate. Plenty of responsible householders are at the same time able to give, and to do so well beyond the boundaries of the family. Nonetheless stinginess will have been there on them at one time, and they will have carried with them the mark of tight self protection. We may never find our ways back to the innocence of easy giving.

Examples

1

In an attempt to maintain my self-respect, I give under a tithing system. I do this because it formalizes and strengthens my desire to share, and to combat a natural stinginess. Common moral value indicates that the giving in question is best done from the heart, and with no expectation of return. However—as more than one wise person has hinted—giving can sometimes be/provide/prompt its own reward, and thus set up, in the giver, a red alert; *give not that ye should be rewarded*. It is my sense, possibly delusional, that when I am in a giving mode I turn out to be in a receiving mode. My ship comes in. My girl friend calls. My ATT stock goes up. Crazy? Noteworthy enough that I hunker down, and refuse to giving what ambition it might sport, to become a lottery.

2

I do not give money to 'beggars.' I do not give money to nice looking hippy couple beggars with a dog, who catch my eye at an intersection, or to frightfully crippled people on urban street corners. I am besieged by demands on my small retirement income, and though I regret saying it, and though what I am saying seems self-contradictory, I have to budget my generosity in order to be generous at all. I give to institutions I know and respect, and on the whole not to people. Above all, following what my mom told me, I never lend money. It makes me seem stingier, I guess, that I also never borrow money. I am what my kids call tight-assed.