In research projects by “Action for Happiness” two groups were created. The first group was given £20 to spend on themselves. The second group was given £20 to spend on someone else. What the results showed was that the group who spent on others experienced happiness and well being to a greater extent, and for longer.

Giving isn’t just about money. We can give time, care, skills, attention and thought. We can give away a small part of ourselves every day. And scientific studies show this giving not only boosts happiness, it increases our sense of satisfaction; of competence; of purpose. It improves our mood and reduces stress. It takes our mind off our own problems, prevents us becoming self absorbed - and it is infectious.

And when we come to consider how this research resonates with the Bible story, the match could not be more obvious. Giving is something which shapes the whole narrative. God is a Giver. He gives creation and everything in it, and it is good, it is very good. He creates us in a way which includes a precious part of Himself - His image.

And if this is not enough, the giving is hugely sacrificial. Sacrifice is one of the most significant Biblical meta-narratives - stories which form an all encompassing theme, which give sense and meaning. Central to Christianity is the sacrifice on the cross of God becoming man in Jesus - God’s ultimate and complete gift of Himself, to and for each one of us.

The parable that comes to mind when thinking of God the Giver is The Prodigal Son. Barbara Brown Taylor considers this parable should be called The Prodigal Father, because it is about God The Father.Having given away a half share of his inheritance at his son’s request, a request, by the way, which is tantamount to wishing his father was dead, the son squanders everything. He returns, thinking only of treatment in line with one of his father’s servants. But the father rushes out to greet him, robe hitched - incidentally the equivalent of making a fool of yourself in public; something which would never have been the done thing - as likely as seeing the queen rushing out of Buckingham Palace, skirt hitched. He kisses him; welcomes him and lavishes on the son a feast of grand proportions. And God is like that with us. Giving before we have chance to ask; giving, even when we don’t deserve it.

And the Christian invitation is for us to share in this Biblical narrative of sacrifice and giving. From the sacrifice of Isaac, through Passover and Old Testament sacrificial requirements meticulously set out, giving is God inviting us to share in

His nature. Because God knows that it is in giving that we can become our true selves. “Those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” (Mark 8:35.) Give it away to gain it!

I have often thought that the world splits into two camps - givers and takers. And no doubt for some people it is much more natural to give of themselves - to be good givers. For others there is a need for intentionality - to work at it. Because if the research is right, happiness is in the giving. (In fact we may well find as we work through the 10 keys that this is a general principle that works for all of them. Some are easier than others. Some you have to work at.) To quote Winston Churchill “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

So here is a key to happiness which absolutely is in tune with God. Maybe there is a reason this is the first key. And the tip for the day - give a bit of yourself away today. And give thanks for who God is.

3 good things that happened today - did that for a week and found that well being improved markedly. This is Examen

Chris Peterson - if you want to remember one thing “other people matter.”

Loneliness as detrimental to wellbeing as smoking or obesity.

Exercise = miracle grown for the brain

Acceptance “don’t compare your insides with other peoples outsides”