Mainly, we’re all set to sell and buy, not to give and receive. We tend to give nothing free of charge and receive nothing free of charge...To give is to lose.” (pg. 14)

“It’s not by our generosity, however slender, that we are saved, at least not according to the Christian tradition. We are saved by God’s generosity.” (pg. 20)

“Our eyes and ears need a heart ready to receive the truth of God’s reality rather than one that longs for the comforts of false gods.” (pg. 23)

“God’s goods are not for sale; you can’t buy them with money or good deeds. God doesn’t make deals. God gives.” (pg. 26)

“...a Santa Claus God gives simply so we can have and enjoy things; the true God gives so we can become joyful givers and not just self-absorbed receivers. God the giver has made us to be givers and obliges us therefore to give...” (pg. 28)

“For the God who resurrects, nothing is the end.” (pg. 30)

“To give to God is to take from God’s right hand and put that very thing back into God’s left hand.” (pg. 33)

“We can be both dependent on God and free; dependence on God is the source of our being, and therefore, our freedom. But we can’t be created by God and independent; God sustains creatures in being and in freedom.” (pg. 35)

“When we attempt to free ourselves on our own, we deny the true source of our goodness and wrong God by claiming for ourselves what is God’s...we “nullify the grace of God and declare that “Christ died for nothing”...God gives gifts, God cancels the debt we incur by improperly receiving them, and then God gives us the ability to receive gifts properly.” (pg. 37)

“But we don’t need to give up on the idea that God seeks God’s own glory. We just need to say that God’s glory, which is God’s very being, is God’s love...

“Unlike gifts received from Santa Claus, whose gifts are the end of the story, God’s gifts oblige us to something further...” (pg. 39)

“God’s gifts oblige us to...faith...gratitude...availability...participation...” (pg. 42)

“But we are not independent in relation to God. Our power to be and to act comes from God. Faith merely recognizes this. Hence faith doesn’t tell us how little we are and what we can’t do. On the contrary, it celebrates what we most properly are—God’s empowered creatures—and it frees us to our greatest accomplishments.” (pg. 44)

“Faith receives God’s gifts as gifts; gratitude receives them well.” (pg. 46)

“...the purpose for which God gives. True, God gives so that we can help exist and flourish, but not only for that. God gives so that we can help others exist and flourish as well. God’s gifts aim at making us into
generous givers, not just fortunate receivers. God gives so that we, in human measure, can be givers too.” (pg. 47)

“Today most of us want to be agents, not instruments.” (pg. 49)

“It is not just that Christ sends the goods to flow into us; Christ makes the goods flow from us as well, truly indwelling, motivating, and acting through us. That’s Luther’s point…a Christian is a “Christ” to others.” (pg. 51)

“Every gift breaks the barrier between the sacred and the mundane and floods the mundane with the sacred. When a gift is given, life becomes extraordinary because God’s own gift giving flows through the giver.” (pg. 54)

“…three basic modes in which we relate to one another: the coercive mode (theft), the sales mode (buying/selling), and gift mode (donors/recipients)...” (pg. 56)

“To the extent that we are channels of gifts, however, we can’t just do with them as we please. They come to us with an ultimate name and address other than our own. Though in our hands, they are on their way elsewhere. The acts of enjoying the gifts ourselves while still passing them on often coincide, as when we play music in the company of others or discuss a fascinating issue with friends. We then enjoy what we give…” (pg. 60)

“…unlike God, we always exercise our will as beings constantly shaped by many factors—by language, parental rearing, culture, media, advertising, and peer pressure, and through all these, we are shaped either by God or by God’s adversary. Often we don’t perceive ourselves as shaped at all. If we are not visibly and palpably coerced, we think that we act autonomously, spontaneously, and authentically. Yet we are wrong.” (pg. 66)

“God is essentially a giver just as God is love...God is a giver more the way ducks are quackers than in the way I’m a biker...Christians that believe that God, who is one and yet beyond numbering, is the Holy Trinity. God is the Speaker, the Word, and the Breath...” (pg. 71)

“All things are owned in common, and therefore gifts are impossible: that’s Marxist utopia. Gifts are most generously given, and therefore all things are common: that’s a Christian vision of the world to come. In the life of the eternal God, all things are common because gift giving is perfect. And so it will be for human beings when the living water of God’s gifts fully floods their souls.” (pg. 73)

“Why does God still choose to give through us? Because God hasn’t created us to be only receivers, but to be givers as well. Nobody is only a giver...Everybody is a receiver too. The inverse is also true...” (pg. 79)

“The receipt of the original gift is itself like an unwritten contract: By receiving, I promise not to keep the gift for myself or to use it as I please, but to pass it on in accordance with the wishes of the original giver. If I receive the gift but fail to fulfill the promise, I have misdirected the gift, wronging both the original giver and the intended recipient.” (pg. 80)
“...our gifts to one another should aim at parity in the midst of drastic and pervasive inequality...The immediate goal is not uniformity. Equality of the kind the Apostle (Paul) has in mind is compatible with one party having much while the other has little, but it’s incompatible with one party having “too much” while the other has “too little.” (pg. 82)

“...the gift’s magnitude is irrelevant in assessing the greatness of the giver. What matters is the spirit in which the gift is given.” (pg. 83)

“A gift is a social relation, not an entity or an act in itself. It is an event between people...good gifts bind people together...Gifts forge communities, and as many sociologists observe, communities foster gift giving.” (pg. 84)

“...Paradoxically, the withheld fruit is a sacrament of a given world. They missed the paradox, however, and mistreated the gift.” (pg. 94)

“...Other’s favorable opinion of us, as well as our own positive self-esteem, often feel like scarce goods. We compete with others not just for things, but also for a reputation as upright, talented, and useful people. Even the most excellent reputation is easily lost, sometimes without any cause beyond the envy of our competitors...Our giving is marred by the desire to congratulate ourselves and to be congratulated by others.” (pg. 99)

“If we are good givers to the extent that we echo God’s giving, then only God can reverse the ill effects that selfishness, pride, and sloth have on giving.” (pg. 100)

“The crucial question is this: As rational beings, why would we want to give more than we expect to receive?” (pg. 102)

“The only way to ensure that we will not lose our very selves if we give ourselves to others is if our love for the other passes through God, if we...love and enjoy others in God. Those who serve the poor often express such a stance by saying that they serve Jesus in the one they help. The same is true of all Christian giving.” (pg. 103)

“We can be poor and afflicted...and still give. We can be affluent and secure...and still not give. Wealth doesn’t make us givers; poverty can’t prevent us from being givers. The poor can give a kind word, a sympathetic ear, or helping hand. But they can also share food, clothing, shelter, and money—and they generally do it in greater proportion to their means than the wealthy do.” (pg. 107)

“...we can consider others as the intended beneficiaries of God’s gifts. God gives to them—and gives to them through us—and we give too.” (pg. 108)

“If the presence of the gift-giving Christ makes us rich, rest will replace weariness, and peace will banish unending restlessness. Like the apostle Paul, we will then know the secret of being content whatever the circumstance...we will then give, even if we must work hard to do so and sacrifice what’s rightfully ours (see 1 Corinthians 9:1-14).” (pg. 109)
“Just as we can be proud of our humility, so we can be proud of giving modestly...And the belief that sacrifice is the measure of a gift’s greatness may just democratize pride rather than remove it...” (pg. 111)

“Recipient’s ingratitude may be one of the most difficult obstacles for givers to overcome.” (pg. 114)

“It will not help much if we simply remind ourselves: God gives to the ungrateful, and so should we. But it will help if we remember that it’s God who gives when we give. For then we need to deflect gratitude that comes to us anyway. We are not its proper address. God is.” (pg. 115)

“Think of the Spirit as the arms of our hearts that embrace Christ as the open doors of our energies and skills that welcome Christ in. In these two ways, the Spirit enables each of us in our specific way to be a Christ to others—and thereby heals our indolence...As we give, it’s Christ who gives...” (pg. 116)

“Communities don’t make givers. Givers are not made by humans at all. They are born—born of the Spirit through the good practices of communities. God’s spirit is the agent; people are the instruments.” (pg. 120)

“To keep liberty we need grace. To live humanely we must learn to forgive.” (pg. 126)

“...When we give, we seek the good of another, not our own good...The same is true of forgiveness...We give when we delight in others or others are in need; by giving, we enhance their joy or make up for their lack. We forgive when others wronged us; by forgiving, we release them from the burden of their wrongdoing. The difference lies in the violation suffered, in the burden of wrongdoing, offense, transgression, debt. And that’s what makes it more difficult to forgive than to give.” (pg. 130)

“...We forgive because God forgives. We forgive as God forgives...So to understand our own forgiving, we need to start with God’s, which brings us to two common misconceptions of God...God is an implacable judge (tough diving negotiator) and that God is a doting grandparent (soft, heavenly Santa)...” (pg. 131)

“God isn’t wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love...once we affirm that God’s condemnation of wrongdoing is appropriate, we cannot reserve God’s condemnation for heinous crimes.” (pg. 139)

“You can sum up where we’ve landed in four simple sentences. The world is sinful. That’s why God doesn’t affirm it indiscriminately. God loves the world. That’s why God doesn’t punish it in justice.” (pg. 140).

“And the God who gives became the God who forgives...The same love that propelled God to create by giving propelled God to mend creation by forgiving...

“To be just is to condemn the fault and, because of the fault, to condemn the doer as well. To forgive is to condemn the fault but to spare the doer. That’s what the forgiving God does.” (pg. 141)
“God doesn’t ‘reckon sin’…God ‘covers’ sin…God puts our wrongdoing ‘behind [God’s] back’…God removes our transgression from us as far as the east is from the west…God ‘blots out’ our sin…God ‘sweeps away’ our sins…God doesn’t even remember our sins…” (pg. 142)

“God is neither above moral law nor below it. Rather, moral law is an expression of God’s very being.” (pg. 143)

“Christ’s death doesn’t replace our death. It enacts it…That’s what theologians call inclusive substitution. Because one has died, all have died.” (pg. 147)

“What does it mean to receive forgiveness, then? It means to receive both the accusation and the release from the debt. How do we receive the debt? We simply believe and rejoice in gratitude for the generous gift. But how do we receive the accusation? By confessing our offence and repenting of it.” (pg. 153)

“…Luther…The outward forgiveness that I show in my deeds is a sure sign that I have the forgiveness of sin in the sight of God. On the other hand, if I do not show this in my relations with my neighbor, I have a sure sign that I do not have the forgiveness of sin in the sight of God and am still stuck in my unbelief.” (pg. 156)

“…in discussing forgiveness…three corresponding modes in which we relate to offenders and their offense. Revenge corresponds to illicit taking, the demand for justice corresponds to legitimate acquiring, and forgiving roughly corresponds to generous giving.” (pg. 158)

“But why is forgiveness, rather than retributive justice, a Christian duty? … Consistent enforcement of justice would wreak havoc in a world shot through with transgression. It may rid the world of evil, but at the cost of the world’s destruction.” (pg. 160)

“That’s how we should treat those who transgress us. We should absorb the wrongdoing in order to transform the wrongdoers…

“Revenge multiples evil. Retributive justice contains evil—and threatens the world with destruction. Forgiveness mirrors the generosity of God whose ultimate goal is neither to satisfy injured pride nor to justly apportion reward and punishment, but to free sinful humanity from evil and thereby reestablish communion with us. This is the gospel in its stark simplicity—as radically countercultural and at the same time as beautifully human as anything one can imagine.” (pg. 161)

“Why do we forgive instead of giving in to vengeance…Because in Christ, God overcame our sin and reestablished communion with us by forgiving. We do as God did. We forgive because “recalling” the offenders from sin matters more to us than “avenging” wrongs we have suffered. We forgive because “saving” our enemies and making friends out of them matters more to us than punishing them.” (ppg. 162)

“God’s gifts are original; ours are derivative.” (pg. 162)

“…but emotional healing is not the main purpose of forgiveness. To forgive means to forgo a rightful claim against someone who has wronged us. That’s a gift we give…to the one who has wronged us…And
there’s no way to give the gift of forgiveness without the sting of condemnation. We accuse when we forgive, and in doing that, we affirm the rightful claims of justice…” (pg. 169)

“But punishment cannot release us from guilt. Only forgiveness can…Christ didn’t only bear our punishment on account of his ones with God; Christ also separated us, the doers, from our evil deeds and released us from guilt on account of his oneness with humanity…” (pg. 172)

“In forgiving, we blame a person in order to release them from their debt...we remember the debt for a while in order to let it ultimately into oblivion.” (pg. 174)

“We are so used to hearing about the indiscriminate nature of God’s forgiveness that our moral sensibilities are dulled to its scandalousness. But scandalous it is.” (pg. 178)

“Before we do anything...even exist, God’s giving and God’s forgiving are already there, free of charge.” (pg. 180)

“...forgiveness is not just state of mind; it is something we give to someone else...a social relationship.” (pg. 181)

“Instead of being a condition of forgiveness, however, repentance is its necessary consequence.” (pg. 183)

“In a Christian account of things, we forgive because we love—specifically, because we love our debtors, our offenders, and even our enemies. The same love that motivates forgiveness pushes forgiveness not just from exclusion to neutrality, but from neutrality to embrace. Forgiveness between human beings is one crucial step in a large process whose final goal is the embrace of former enemies in a community of love.” (pg. 189)

“Because God in Christ doesn’t count your trespasses against you and because God has removed your guilt from you, I too don’t count against you the fact that you’ve wronged me, and I don’t consider you guilty. God has made you innocent, and therefore I consider you innocent.” (pg. 196)

“From Christ, we receive the power and the willingness to forgive. Christ forgives through us, and that is why we can forgive.” (pg. 200)

“If on the bottom of line of our lives lies the principle that we should get what we deserve, whether good or ill, forgiveness will sit uncomfortably with us. To forgive is to give people more than their due, it’s to release them from the debt they have incurred, and that’s bound to mess up the books.” (pg. 203)

“We forgive because Christ has forgiven us and because Christ forgives through us.” (pg. 206)

“Yet even when offenders are unrepentant, we can and should forgive. There are better ways to protect ourselves than the refusal to forgive. And when it comes to reminding offenders that they’ve committed the offense, we do that precisely by forgiving. Recall that to forgive is to blame. We do condemn when we forgive. We do it gently and lovingly, but we still do it.” (pg. 208)
“We also bear the burden of forgiveness because when we are forgivers we are restored to our full human splendor. We were created to mirror God.” (pg. 209)

“We don’t need to know the exact nature and extent of the offense. God knows, and we join God in forgiving.” (pg. 211)

“Seek the company of forgiven forgivers!” (pg. 214)

“Prideful forgiveness...We nurse our resentment; we hold the offender locked in the grip of our accusations; we feel righteous in comparison; we dream of revenge and feel the power of an avenger surging through our veins. To forgive would be to give up on all this power and pride.” (pg. 215)

“...when we forgive, we give, and the offenders receive. Giving itself can be a source of pride...” (pg. 215)

“The Christian tradition has always maintained three propositions simultaneously...we are always sinners...we always remain God’s good creatures...no wrongdoing is an isolated act...it is nourished by our sinful inclination and reinforced by a sinful culture.” (pg. 216)

“...All our forgiving is inescapably incomplete. That’s why it’s so crucial to see our forgiving not simply as our own act, but as participation in God’s forgiving. Our forgiving is faulty; God’s is faultless. Our forgiving is provisional; God’s is final. We forgive tenuously and tentatively; God forgives unhesitatingly and definitely...Our forgiveness is only possible as an echo of God’s.” (pg. 220)

“I have doubts, of course. But having doubts is far from consenting to the falseness of this beautiful life...I am different from God. God knows and doesn’t doubt. I believe and doubt. Doubt is part of belief; it isn’t contrary to it...” (pg. 228)

“Everything depends on God—just not our belief in God. It depends on God’s presence in our life. And God is present to us whether we believe it or not.” (pg. 233)

“Spirituality that’s not theological will grope in the darkness, and theology that’s not spiritual will be emptied of its most important content. For me, at any rate, thinking theologically in order to write about giving and forgiving was a spiritual exercise. I trust that the reading of it will serve the same purpose.” (pg. 236)