
Words of Truth

There Are Qualifiers To Helping “Those In Need”

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This article is not going to be addressing the work of the church as a collective body. We know that the local church may only financially support faithful elders (I Timothy 5:17-18) and Gospel preachers (I Corinthians 9:1-14, II Corinthians 11:8, and Philippians 4:11-18). In respect to needy saints, we know the local church is limited to aiding scripturally qualified widows (I Timothy 5:1-16) and truly needy faithful saints (Romans 15:25-27, I Corinthians 16:1-4, and II Corinthians 8:1-9:14).

What we are going to be addressing are some things we, as individual Christians, should consider when helping people that are in need (i.e. Matthew 25:31-46). Some would have us to believe that anyone in financial need can be helped by individual Christians because the church is not involved. Not only is that not true, which we'll study in this article, but it also ignores many Scriptural truths. We're going to begin our study by looking at an obvious case wherein a person is truly in need and we'd be wrong to pass that person by. Then we will make some other Scriptural applications to help us know when to help others.

One Really In Need

Consider this text: *“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readeest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:25-37).*

There is no way a logical person could conclude that a person robbed naked and left “half dead” is not a person in need. Circumstances may increase or decrease how one could help, but the need for help is clear. What do you do when things are not so clear?

Using The Scriptures Aright When The Situation Is Not So Clear

All Christians are people who want to be kind (Colossians 3:12) and helpful (Acts 4:32-37). Yet, there are biblical truths we cannot ignore. For example, notice this command: *“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat”* (II Thessalonians 3:10). Clearly, we cannot help those who refuse to work. However, while that is the clear point, think about an underlying truth in this verse. Doesn't this command require you to know something about a person before helping them? I need to know whether or not a person is just a lazy bum or not. A lazy bum needs to be left to reap what he or she has not sown (Proverbs 20:4, Proverbs 21:25, and Proverbs 24:30-34).

However, even with what we just addressed, things still are not always so clear. The “Good Samaritan” did not know if the man he was helping was lazy or not. However, it was clear that his condition was not due to his laziness. Therefore, there are times wherein we have to use really wise judgment. We could end up doing more harm than good by helping the wrong person.

The word of God teaches us not to help people stay in their erring conditions. Notice: *“I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah”* (Jeremiah 23:14). In addition to that, we're supposed to take great measures not to cause others to stumble (I Corinthians 8:13 [in principle]). What are you or I doing if we give money to a lazy person? What are you or I doing if we give money to a drunkard or drug addict? What are you or I doing if we give money to a great waster? In all of those, and many more cases that could be stated, we are strengthening the hands of evildoers and causing them to stumble further. We have to see these things through God's eyes rather than our emotions.

Seeing It Through God's Eyes

Who does God hear? Does He give His ear to unrepentant sinners? He says, NO (Proverbs 15:29, Proverbs 28:9, Isaiah 59:1-3, Jeremiah 5:25, John 9:31, and I Peter 3:12)! Can you be more loving than God? God is love (I John 4:8). Therefore, we must conclude that it is loving to turn our ears from those that refuse to change or even begin the act of changing. We're supposed to follow God's example (Ephesians 5:1). We should teach the lost to be saved (Matthew 28:19, Luke 24:47, and Romans 10:14-17). That is a true act of love. Help the lost stay alive, like the Samaritan did to the robbed man, so that he can have the opportunity to be saved. However, don't help the person who has dug himself or herself into a hole and has no desire to get his or her life right. That person is a wasted cause that should be left to reap what he or she has sown (Galatians 6:7-8). See who to help and how to help that person or persons through God's eyes. Your heart will only deceive you in this and other matters (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Conclusion

We could cover much more. For example, we could cover how the word “visit” in James 1:27 means, “to inspect, look after”. You cannot do that just by writing a check. The fact is, truly helping those that God wants us to help requires honest study and application of the truth.