

LOVE
 Without Hypocrisy
 (in the book of Romans)

21 – Sharing with God's people (3)
 > A History Lesson <

When the church was a
"newborn"



Those who were part of it **took care of each other.**
 They knew each other, so they knew who qualified for help.



They spent time with each other and could understand what each other's needs were.

All the believers were **together** and had everything in common.
 Selling their possessions and goods, **they gave** to anyone as he had need.
 Every day they continued to meet **together** in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate **together** with glad and sincere hearts, ...
Acts 2:44-46 (NIV)

★ They could tell if people were faking it, ★
 or if they did not have the values of God's kingdom.

When the church started
growing



They took care of each other in the whole community.
 The leadership could gather information, to know who qualified for help.



As the community expanded, **individuals** could not get to know everyone well enough to know their needs. **But they were still willing to share.**

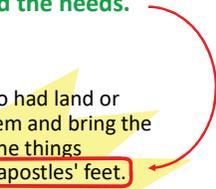
... **they shared** everything they owned.
 ... none of them needed anything, ...
Acts 4:32b, 34a (ISV)

HOW DID THEY DO IT?



The **leaders** of the church, who devoted all their time to the ministry, were better qualified to find out who had the needs.

... because everyone who had land or houses would sell them and bring the **money received for the things sold and lay it at the apostles' feet.**
 Then **it was distributed** to anyone who needed it.
Acts 4:34b-35 (ISV)



When the job became too overwhelming for the leaders, other qualified people were chosen to help.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, ... widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

So the Twelve [apostles] gathered all the disciples together and said, ... "Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ..."

Acts 6:1-2a, 3 (NIV)

When the church was reaching maturity



They took care of each other in the whole world.

Christians at one location would send help to the needy Christians at another location.

They would choose qualified individuals to make sure the help reached its proper destination.

One of [the prophets], named Agabus, got up and predicted by the Spirit that a severe famine was about to come over the whole inhabited world. (This took place during the reign of Claudius.)

So the disciples, each in accordance with his financial ability, decided to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.

They did so, sending their financial aid to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 11:28-30 (NET)

↑
THOSE WHO DISTRIBUTED IT

There are many other examples of helping in the New Testament. Here are some:

1 Corinthians 16:1-4 2 Corinthians 8-9
Galatians 2:10
Acts 24:17 Romans 15:25-27
James 2:15-17
1 John 3:17-18 Hebrews 13:16

There are also commands, illustrations, parables, etc.

★ Including the command found in our theme verse! ★

Share with God's people who are in need.
Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:13 (NIV)

Other passages describe conditions that qualify or disqualify a person for being helped.

As we look through Scripture ...

We can learn a lot about both the givers and the receivers.

If we compile all this information, we can make some important discoveries.

FOR INSTANCE ...



WHO
 were the recipients?
God's people ...
 and among those, **ONLY**
 the ones who **qualified!**

WHO
 were **NOT** the recipients?
 Any who did not qualify.
 Also, there is **no** indication that **unsaved**
 people were ever the recipients!
 (This does not prove that *individuals* didn't help family and friends.)

When churches collected money for the poor,
 it was for **GOD'S PEOPLE** who were in need!

None of **them** needed anything.
 ...money was distributed to
 anyone who needed it.
Acts 4:34a, 35b (GW)

"THEM"
 REFERS
 TO
 GOD'S
 PEOPLE!

Now, concerning the money to be
 collected for **God's people** {in
 Jerusalem} ...
1 Cor. 16:1a (GW)

During the severe famine (Acts 11:28-30),
 unsaved people were
just as hungry as the Christians were.

... Agabus ... predicted ... that a **severe**
famine was about to come over **the**
whole inhabited world.
Acts 11:28a, 29 (NET)

★ **But who received the help?** ★

So the disciples ... decided to send relief
 to **the brothers** living in Judea.
Acts 11:28a, 29 (NET)

If this is the way God's people
 – **including the apostles** –
 always did it ...

There must be
 a **good** reason!

If we don't understand
 why they did it this way ...

It's NOT that the
Bible is wrong!

★ It is **WE** who may have to
 change our views. ★

THINGS TO DO

- ✓ **US** – Find out what the *Bible* says about our **obligations** toward the unsaved. You'll quickly discover:
 - Most church-goers have *no interest* in fulfilling the obligations that are actually found in Scripture!
 - Yet they're willing to do all kinds of *other* things that the Bible does *NOT* command!
- ✓ **THEM** – Find out what the *Bible* says about the **qualifications and obligations** of those being helped.
 - Many "needy" people don't qualify; and many would be unwilling to fulfil their obligations!

THINGS TO DO

- ✓ **WHO** – Find out what the *Bible* says about **who** should be helping them (OR: if *nobody* should).
 - Sometimes, instead of the church being involved, it may be an individual's responsibility – perhaps a family member, a next-door neighbor, etc.
- ✓ **CAUTION** – Find out what the *Bible* says about **your guilt**, if you encourage sin, by helping those who are *not* qualified.
 - **Yes**, when you *enable* someone to sin, you *do* share in the guilt.

SOMETHING TO NOT DO

... do not share in the sins of others.

1 Tim. 5:22b (NIV)

Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, rebuke and expose them.

Ephes. 5:11 (NLT)

There are **many** ways that churches can become guilty of sin, especially when they focus on **free handouts**, rather than on **sharing as a family**.

⊘ **HANDOUTS: ONE DIRECTION.**

Little or no accountability or interaction with the givers.

✓ **SHARING: BOTH DIRECTIONS**

Much accountability and interaction with the givers.

TWO EXAMPLES

of people "soaking up" free handouts, like a sponge.





Some issues to consider

- ✓ Specific qualifications for receiving help.
- ✓ Duties of the recipient.
- ✓ Ways a needy person can share (whether or not they are the recipient of help).

Your Mission...

EVALUATE YOUR GIVING AND RECEIVING (WHICHEVER IS APPLICABLE).

ARE THERE WAYS YOU NEED TO IMPROVE, OR CHANGE?

For the GIVER: Share with God's people who are in need. Romans 12:13a (NIV)

For the RECIEVER: Consider the rest of Romans 12:9-13 – additional ways to express "unhypocritical love" to other Christians!

Credits (1)

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Your Mission...

**"Share with God's people who are in need.
Practice hospitality."**

Romans 12:13

Who defines your "needs" and their order of priority?

God, or the godless world? If you choose to run after the things that the *world* runs after, then why would you claim to be "following Jesus"? *He's going in the opposite direction!*

***UNLESS WE ACCEPT THE PRIORITIES
THAT GOD GIVES US,
WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT OUR
NEEDS ARE!***

**For the pagans run after all these things [physical needs],
and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.**

**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all
these things will be given to you as well.**

**Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow
will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble
of its own.** (Matthew 6:32-34)

The priority that God requires of *all* who follow him.

- The key focus *everywhere* in Scripture is summarized by Matthew 6:33. God knows what our physical needs are. When we get preoccupied with them, we have chosen to live like the world. In doing so, we have chosen to *not* believe that God will keep his promises. We have rejected living like Jesus.

What does *God* say our needs are?

- Jesus as our "spiritual doctor" - Matthew 9:12 (a proverb).
- Paying attention to what Jesus teaches - Luke 10:38-42 (note the contrast between Mary's focus and Martha's focus).
- Learning the "basics" about the truth in God's Word ... then continuing on to maturity - Hebrews 5:11-14.
- Endurance, when circumstances are difficult - Hebrews 10:36.
- Each other (and the spiritual gifts God has given us to share) - 1 Corinthians 12:21-26 (the way the parts of a *physical* body interact illustrate how the body of Christ is to interact).

Warnings and illustrations.

- Don't live in denial of what your *genuine* needs are, as these people did - Revelation 3:14-22!
- Israel, in their journey through the wilderness, constantly shifted their focus from God to their physical needs. When they didn't get what they claimed they "needed" (ignoring their spiritual needs), they would grumble against God, question his faithfulness, etc. The apostle Paul tells us that the judgments they received should be taken as a warning by us - 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.
- The apostle John illustrates a godly priority in 3 John 1:2. Since his friend's *spiritual* needs had already been met ("your soul is getting along well"), John could go on to wish him well in his *physical* needs.