



**“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again” (Proverbs 19:17).**

### **Should I Give Benevolently?**

**Central Truth:** Benevolence is one of your special ministries as a steward.

**L235. Date:** February 1994. **Text:** Proverbs 14:31; Luke 6:30-31; Acts 20:35. **Topic:** Stewardship: Of Money; Money: Possession of.

Several years ago a man came to my church office with a very sad story. His mother had died in Oklahoma, and he was on his way to her funeral. His car had broken down and he needed money to get it repaired. He was so sincere, so evidently broken with sorrow, that I gave him some money from our church's benevolence fund. He went away, and I was pleased that I could help him.

Two or three years passed. The church had grown until we had to relocate our offices in preparing more educational space for our people. One day the same man came to my office saying his mother had died in Oklahoma and he was on his way to her funeral. His car had broken down and . . . you know the rest of the story.

That true incident illustrates a basic problem in our society. There is much abuse of the secular welfare system and religious benevolent ministries. It behooves the Christian to be very careful about what he supports.

Do not give without knowing the details about where your gift will go and how it will be used. Do not give on the basis of the emotion of the moment, as the picture of a little child on the television screen or printed page. Be careful how and to whom you give, but give! Benevolence is an important part of Christian stewardship. It is a sign of love and obedience (I John 3:17). A gift to the needy is not really to the person but to the Lord (Proverbs 19:17).

## **Benevolence Is Needed**

Sometimes the saints of God suffer lack. Hebrews 11:32-38 reports how some of God's choice saints suffered: *"They wondered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, and tormented"* (verse 37). You will remember how the prophet Elijah was without food, asking a little piece of bread from a widow in Zarephath, and she gave it to him even though she and her son were on the brink of starvation (I Kings 17:12). There was the widow of a prophet who was threatened by a creditor (II Kings 4:1). Even the great apostle Paul wrote that he had learned by experience what it means to suffer lack even to the extent of suffering hunger (Philippians 4:12). Yes, the most faithful of God's saints sometimes suffer lack. Have you experienced such times of real need?

Saints can help one in such times. Chapters 8 and 9 of I Corinthians report how saints in Greece made up a liberal offering to send to saints in Palestine who were suffering from a drought. The early Christians sold houses and lands to provide the needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ (Acts 2:44, 45; 4:34, 35). Jesus told of a Samaritan who risked danger, put forth special effort, and spent money to care for a man who was injured (Luke 10:30-35). That is the way the spirit of Christ is shown today.

God supplies the needs of His children. Sometimes He provides through circumstances and sometimes through other of His children. But always it is He who provides. Be available as an agent through which God will provide for others. You will not suffer loss. He promises, *"The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself"* (Proverbs 11:25).

## **Benevolence Is Reciprocal**

It is not all give and no receive. God's rule is, *"I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality"* (II Corinthians 8:13, 14). You give where there is a need. Be like the virtuous woman: *"She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy"* (Proverbs 31:20). Do not be selfish with whatever wealth God has entrusted to your stewardship. Give liberally and gladly.

Receive when you have need. Do not be too proud to receive. The brother or sister who would help you is serving God by that act. Receive with thankful humility as from the hand of God.

## **Benevolence Is a Witness**

The Epistle of James calls for a practical demonstration of faith. Words alone are never enough; actions should give validity to the words. James points to providing the necessities of life to a destitute brother or sister as one way of demonstrating that our faith in Jesus is real (James 2:15-17).

A witness in words only is useless in meeting human need. What good does it do to say, “God bless you; be warmed and fed,” if you do not give to meet those needs? John says benevolent care for the needs of others is a way to witness that the love of God is in you (I John 3:16-18).

A secular historian wrote of the early Christians, “Behold, how they love one another.” Jesus said, “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*” (John 13:35). People are attracted to an honest expression of loving concern in this cold and uncaring world. You show your love for Jesus by showing love to those whom He loves. Try it!

Benevolence is a witness to your faith, also. It is a way for you to let your light shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father in heaven. Those who trust Jesus must always be “*rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*” (I Timothy 6:18). Jesus said that as you love your enemies, do good, give, and hope for no personal profit in return, your reward will be great in heaven; besides, you will be recognized as a child of the Highest (Luke 6:35). Let giving be a part of your Christian witness.

## **Benevolence Is Worship**

There are two surprising statements in the book of Proverbs regarding our treatment of the poor. Those who take advantage of the poor should hear this warning: “*He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor*” (Proverbs 14:31). To oppress a poor person is to reproach God. What an awful sin! Honor God by having mercy on the poor.

Those whose Christian sympathy reaches out to help the poor should hear this promise: “*He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again*” (Proverbs 19:17). What a motivation to help every person we can, knowing we are serving our Lord thereby.

You serve God by serving people in His name. Therefore, find a need

and fill it. Jesus said we fed Him, gave water to Him, clothed Him, and ministered to Him because, *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”* (Matthew 25:40). Thank God for the availability and privilege of serving Him.

## **Benevolence Is Rewarding**

Jesus said, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35). What is the blessing in benevolent giving?

**Benevolence blesses the needy person.** His necessities are supplied. That results in his recognizing God as the giver and you as the agent. He is *“enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth . . . thanksgiving to God”* (II Corinthians 9:11). His needs are met and he is blessed. **Benevolence blesses the giver.** *“He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor”* (Proverbs 22:9). God himself promises to bless you for your benevolence. He promises that He will give you light and guidance, satisfy your soul, and make you like a watered garden if you will give to the poor (Isaiah 58:10). Test His promise to your delight.

Jesus is our example in giving. Though He was rich, He became poor for our sakes that we might become rich through His poverty (II Corinthians 8:9). Thank God for His willingness to give to us in our need. Thank God for our opportunity to give to those who are in need. Be a faithful steward in all areas of your life.