

Lesson 7: Giving to the Poor

Introduction

Giving to the poor is a mark of being a genuine Christian:

James 1:27 – Pure and undefiled religion includes “visiting” orphans and widows (cf. 1 Jn. 3:17; Mt. 25:31-46).

Increasing in love requires discernment:

Philippians 1:9-11 – “in real knowledge and all discernment”

Illus. Mushroom hunting and cooking may be edifying or terrifying based on the discernment of the shroomer.

Cf. *A Wasp Is Not a Bee* – filled with similar pairs in nature (toad/frog, alligator/crocodile,...)

Who are the paupers and the poor?

Widows and Widows Indeed

Only widows indeed are widows in need.

1 Timothy 5:3-16 – *The Benevolence Policy*

A widow indeed has no one but God to support her (vv. 3, 5).

Other widows have family to support them (vv. 4, 16).

Obj. Why should the church not simply meet needs?

Ans. The church has limited resources—burdening the church now risks meeting needs later (v. 16).
cf. John 6:12-13 – Pick up the scraps rather than presume on another miracle. Stewardship.

A widow indeed has lived a godly life (vv. 9-10).

The church must not give to poor widows who are poor by choice (“paupers”):

Hedonism – those who have loved pleasure (v. 6)

Do not hang out with those who meet

To over eat and over drink,

For drunkenness and gluttony

Will lull you into poverty.

—paraphrase of Proverbs 23:20-21 (cf. 21:17)

Laziness – those who learn to be idle and even gossips and busybodies (e.g. vv. 11-15)

Young widows should not be subsidized, but urged to marry and raise a family.

Therefore, by directing them, we help them; by giving to them, we hurt them.

Remember Ruth – God provided for the poor by letting them glean (a form of work).

Sluggards – Proverbs 10:4; 19:15; 20:4; 24:33-34 (cf. 2 Th. 3:10,12; Pr. 16:26)

Application

1. Give to those who are poor by material circumstances:

E.g. Widows, orphans (fatherless), and persecuted Christians (Heb. 13:3).

The law commanded a soft heart and a wide hand toward the poor (Dt. 15:7-8, 10; 2 Cor. 9:7).

We will never eliminate poverty, but it can be delayed (Mt. 26:11).

We must first help Christians (Gal. 6:10), both near and far away (2 Cor. 8-9).

2. Give to those who are poor by spiritual circumstances:

E.g. Frontier missionaries are sent and need support (Rom. 10:14-15; 15:20-24; 3 Jn. 7-8; Titus 3:13).

Motivations

Open your eyes – let yourself be exposed to the need and feel compassion (Mt. 9:36-38).

Open your ears – let yourself hear the stories of Scripture (Tabitha, Cornelius) and church history:

George Mueller, Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael

Remember the grace of God behind you and the glory of God ahead of you (Titus 2:11-14; cf. 2 Cor. 9:15).

Remember the command and remember the promises (Dt. 15; Lk. 6:38).

And you will experience: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).