

Benevolence — Giving

TEXT: Matthew 6:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Luke 6:38; Hebrews 13:1,2

KEY VERSE: He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse. — Proverbs 28:27

As you study this lesson you will be impressed with the fact that the early disciples gave not just ten percent of their income, but according to, and even beyond, their apparent ability. The Church at Jerusalem was impoverished because of severe persecution; and the Church of Macedonia—itsself in poverty—had set an example of liberality and generosity by gathering a substantial gift for the saints of Jerusalem. In mentioning this gift, Paul was exhorting the Corinthian church likewise to give sacrificially. But in addition to the giving of money, the disciples gave of their time and effort to care for the widows, and shared their possessions with the orphans and the poor among them.

1. Why should we engage in benevolent giving? To whom should we give?

2. Needs are many, and our financial gifts can only extend so far. How can we decide to whom our gifts should be given?

3. *Alms* means “to practice mercy or beneficence—to show compassion.” It is the same word used in the account in Acts concerning the crippled man at the Temple gate who looked for alms from Peter and John. It is also the word used to describe the good works of Cornelius who, according to tradition, may have been the one who built a synagogue for the Jews at Capernaum. It is closely related to the word translated *almsdeeds* used with *good works* to describe the deeds of Dorcas who, through Peter’s prayers, was raised from the dead. In the light of this definition, how should the term “alms” be reflected in Christianity today?

4. In Luke 21:1-4, Christ commended the poor widow who gave her all. But we must be financially responsible in providing for our own needs and for the needs of those in our care. In light of this, how much should we be willing to give?

5. In considering giving, it is good to think about the blessings God has bestowed on our lives. List here some of the gifts you have received from the Lord, both material and spiritual.

6. Using this list, what things can you give benevolently?

7. The problems in our everyday world range from poverty, hunger, and criminal activities to illness, wars, etc. What is the Christian's responsibility in doing something about these problems? How can an individual help?

8. In your own words, write out the verse given in Matthew 6:3 and explain what it means.