

Serving the Spiritual Body

Taking Care of the Needy

Points to Consider

1. Meeting the Immediate, Urgent and Local Needs
2. Meeting the Distant Needs
3. The Link between the Spiritual and the Physical

Acts 2:40-45 *And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. NKJV*

The early Christians were quick to sell their possessions and share the proceeds to anyone who had a **need**.

Acts 4:32-37 *Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. 36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. NKJV*

No one lacked the necessities of life due to the **generosity** of others. They brought the money and laid it at the **apostles'** feet.

Acts 6:1-4 *Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*

The rapid **growth** of the church caused the urgent need to collect and distribute money. The first century church provided daily for the **poor** Christians living in Jerusalem. A subset of "the needy" were Hellenist **widows**.

Taking care of the needy saints was an important part of the early church. It was also important to get the **right** people to handle that responsibility. (see 1 Cor 12:12-30 and Rom 12:3-8)

It needed to be men with a **good** reputation, full of the Holy Spirit, and who possessed wisdom.

It did not need to be the apostles. The apostles needed to be devoted to **prayer** and the Word.

Meeting the Distant Needs

Acts 11:27-30 *And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. NKJV*

The Christians in Antioch sent relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea who were suffering from a **famine**.

They sent the money to the **elders** by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Gal 2:7-10 *But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter 8 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), 9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. NKJV*

While meeting with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning the question as to if the Gentiles had to be circumcised, Paul was told to remember the **poor**.

Rom 15:22-33 *For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, 24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. 25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. 27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. 29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. 30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, 31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 that I may come to you with joy by the*

will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen. NKJV

Paul was very **concerned** about getting the money he collected from Macedonia and Achaia to the Christians in Jerusalem before he went to Rome.

1 Cor 16:1-4 *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. 3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. 4 But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me. NKJV*

Somewhere around 56-57 AD Paul wrote to the Corinthians instructing them to collect money on the first day of the week so it would be **ready** when he came to take it to the poor saints in Jerusalem.

2 Cor 9:1-5 *Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; 2 for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. 3 Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; 4 lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. 5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation. NKJV*

A year after writing his first letter to the Corinthians, he writes another letter informing them that he is sending a delegation to make **sure** their gift to the poor saints in Judea was ready.

The Link Between the Spiritual and the Physical

Matt 15:3-7 *He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? 4 For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 5 But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" — 6 then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. NKJV*

The support of the temple did not **supersede** the financial obligation adult Christians have to help their parents.

John 13:34-35 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." NKJV*

The New Testament Christians were showing the world the love of **Christ** by taking care of one another's needs.

Matt 25:34-36 *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'*

For a Christian, there is no such thing as **non-spiritual** service.

Matt 5:13-16 *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. NKJV*

Matt 7:12 *Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. NKJV*

The golden rule teaches us that we should treat others the way we want to be treated.

Mark 12:28-33 *Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" 29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. 33 And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." NKJV*

The **second** greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself.

2 Cor 8:3-5 *For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. NKJV*

The gift from the Gentiles to the Jews was intended to **unify** the formerly bitter rivals.

Points we Considered

1. Meeting the Immediate, Urgent and Local Needs
2. Meeting the Distant Needs
3. The Link between the Spiritual and the Physical