

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

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

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that benevolent giving or the giving of alms is more than giving money. Alms also means doing kind deeds for the unfortunate and should be done without thought of reward.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Freely ye have received, freely give. — Matthew 10:8

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

ANSWER
TITLE:

A Difficult Decision

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

Benevolence — Giving

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The sect known as Pharisees had been founded many years before Christ to preserve strict adherence to the Law of Moses. As time progressed, many traditions and interpretations of the Law prevailed to negate the actual spirit of the original Law. In Jesus' time, many Pharisees were not sincere of heart and conscience, as evidenced by Christ's condemnation of their hypocrisy and their

hatred and malice toward Him. As Jesus exposed the motives behind the Pharisees' giving, He cautioned His disciples to avoid falling into the same trap—the seeking of recognition of men for their philanthropy. We are to do what we do out of a heart of love for our neighbor, seeking no recognition except that given by our heavenly Father.

YOUR OPENER

[illegible]

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

RESPONSES

- 1. As your students discuss the first question, they should conclude that liberality and the showing of kindness to others stem from a genuine love and compassion for others. In response to the second question, your students may respond by mentioning certain categories of people such as neighbors, family, those in need, and brethren in the church.
- 2. Help your students see that the Lord can direct their giving. Through prayer, the Lord may lead them to contribute to the mission field, or perhaps to give clothing to a needy family down the block. Encourage your students to expand this list.
- 3. Let the group supply several answers. The point should be that compassionate deeds are evidences of a fruit-bearing Christian life, and an opportunity for outreach. Ask the students to give examples, either Biblical or from their own personal knowledge or experience, where an act of kindness resulted in the conversion of a soul.

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?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

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.

4. The discussion here should center on the necessity to hold with a loose hand whatever God has blessed us with. No formula is spelled out in Scripture giving exact amounts or percentages. But we must remember that God knows exactly how willing we are. He also reads the thoughts and motives of our hearts which determine how much and to whom we give. After all, He is the One from whom we received it to begin with.
5. With the aid of the students, develop a list. Some "gifts" may include mental and physical health, family, special talents, material possessions that contribute to our comfort and convenience. Spiritual gifts may include the experiences of salvation, sanctification, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, guidance, comfort. There is also the universal gift of time.
6. Guide the discussion as to how the previously listed gifts can be given back in service to the Lord.
7. As your students discuss these questions, they should see that their personal responsibility must be directed by the Holy Spirit. When God brings a specific need to their attention, they should endeavor to meet that need. Specific methods of involvement, such as contributing to food drives, participation in a neighborhood crime watch, and volunteering time at centers for those afflicted by disease and poverty, could be mentioned. But it should be stressed that God must direct in our involvement. It is possible to overextend ourselves or channel our efforts into areas which would not be the best way of utilizing our physical and financial resources.
8. Encourage your students to share their paraphrasing of this verse. The point should be made that giving without expecting recognition for the gift is one evidence of the sincerity of the commitment to benevolent giving.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What is the meaning of the word *alms*?

What is the meaning of the word *tithes*?

Is it possible to be so poor that you can't give anything?

As long as you give and people know that you do, is that all that is important? Discuss attitude in relation to 1 Corinthians 13:3 and 2 Corinthians 9:6,7.

Do you think it is important to teach young children lessons on giving? Why?

Can you name other ways of giving besides the giving of money?

How might you individually, or as a class, give to others in need?

What is the difference between giving something that is costly and of great value as opposed to giving something of little or no value?

How do you feel when you hear someone bragging about some good deed that he has done?

THINGS TO DO

Organize a class project to help a needy person or family. Some possible ideas: collect canned goods and arrange a pretty box or basket with the donations; plan a day to help an elderly person with yard work or housecleaning; take some homemade cookies to a shut-in, and sing some songs and read the Bible to him.

On the classroom wall, paste Post-it notes naming special jobs for kids who would like to help. Each child may remove the note with the job he wants to complete.

Use part of your time in Sunday school to plan a service activity. Some service activities are: 1) Visit nursing homes and/or homebound church members. 2) Prepare special music for a Sunday school prelude. 3) Provide a service, such as a clean-up day, to beautify the church.

Make a Kindness Tree with your class, using either the outline of a tree on your bulletin board or a real tree branch. Cut out a number of small leaf shapes from construction paper. Have your students take turns telling of a kindness someone else did for them or a person they know about. For each deed mentioned, write a brief de-

scription of the deed on one leaf and attach the leaf to the tree. If you wish, the name of the doer can be written on the reverse side.

Organize a class effort to reach out with tract evangelism in different areas of the city.

Bring broken or unusable objects for each of the students in your class. The more decrepit the better. Bring these "gifts" in a brown bag. Bring another bag filled with pieces of paper that have a promise on each piece (one slip of paper for each student). In class, offer each student a gift. When you hand each student an object from the bag—a broken radio, an outdated sweater, a rusty wrench, etc.—they may laugh or groan and ask what kinds of gifts these are. When they decide they don't want the gifts, offer each of them a promise from your other bag. Which gift is better? Why are material objects not always the best things to give? The promises can be something you will do for each student such as I will pray for you this week, and I will help you in class.

Answers for ANSWER

What Can I Give?

The giving of alms means doing kind deeds. It is done without expecting a reward. Think of at least one thing you can give to someone using the things mentioned below. Write your ideas on the lines in the boxes.

Time:

Mouth:

Heart:

Feet:

Hands:

