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Do Good Unto All (Feb 1956)

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Christianity is a generous and compassionate way of life, for the Word of God teaches believers to be kind and good to all men; in so doing they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. The child of God has received great blessings from a liberal Father Whose generosity is the example set before him in order that he might show or demonstrate his salvation.

The day in which we live, with its dollar conscious economy, finds us considering our giving only in the terms of dollars and cents. True, money is our medium of exchange, and is a convenient form of giving to others, but it is by no means the only way in which we may give as we have received. In this present discussion of practical giving, let us go beyond the familiar needs of those in full time service for Christ, and of worthy faith projects. Let us accept the exhortation to do good unto all men, especially those of the household of faith, and consider time, hospitality, kindness, love, and interest in others, as ways in which we may express the love of Christ within us.

It is possible for some of us to ask, as the lawyer asked the Master, “Who is my neighbour?” Then unwittingly to pattern our behaviour after that of the priest and levite who passed by on the other side (Luke 10:30-37). It is not difficult to stand apart, with our eyes closed to the needs of unbelievers about us, and, since we have no fellowship with them in the things of the world, to miss the opportunity of witnessing to them of the gracious love that Christ has for all. The parable of the Good

Samaritan illustrates a requirement of the law in moral obligation to mankind. The believer is not beyond the law in this point, but, rather, there is abundant testimony in the New Testament to show our responsibility to every man.

The following are some of the circumstances which call for the unreserved giving of our own resources, whether to a fellow Christian, a stranger on the street, or a distant neighbour. We should feel our responsibility to assist each one of these, when sickness or death enters the home, when severe physical damage happens to the home, or when accident, loss of work, or any other misfortune befalls the family. The Christian, who is interested in showing what God has done for him, will find unlimited scope for that practical testimony that frequently opens the door for testimony to spiritual things. “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase” (Prov. 3:9). The Lord expects His portion of that which He has given us, and He should receive that portion first, lest we consume it upon ourselves. It is possible for us to hold back, or to put off giving, but the Word of God says, “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee” (Prov. 3:27-28). Is it not possible that we loose the joy and blessing of giving when we hold back expecting that some one else will meet the need we see? “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully… for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

Although it is one of the requisites for an elder that he be hospitable, the apostle Peter exhorts all believers

that they likewise “Use hospitality one to another without grudging” (1 Pet. 4:9). In hospitality there lies an opportunity which we all may grasp to work out our own salvation. The home at Bethany was a haven for our Saviour; there He could rest from the pressure of the day, and enjoy sweet fellowship with those He loved. Are our homes a place of rest for weary travellers? Are our tables a centre of fellowship for beloved saints? Does our greeting to strangers at the assembly door reflect the warmth of love expressed by the wall-text just within their view ? Have the neighbours enjoyed a cup of tea in our home, and then placed the empty cup beside an open Bible on the table? We cannot afford to miss the opportunity of Christian testimony which hospitality alone provides.

There are three very good examples of hospitality recorded in the Holy Scriptures. In the first two of these examples there had been no previous contact, nor any apparent reason to show hospitality.

“And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread” (2 Kings 4:8). Please notice the force of the word “constrained” in each of these examples. It does not mean a mere casual invitation, but an honest desire to show love one to another. After the great woman had talked with Elisha in her home, she found that he was no ordinary man, “Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God” (2 Kings 4:9).

In the second example, a very warm invitation was given one evening by a couple heavy with sorrow to a stranger

who had joined them on their way home. He had enquired of them the reason for their sorrow, and to comfort them He had explained from the Scriptures the happenings of the darkest day in their lives. They were greatly cheered and comforted, but still they did not recognize their companion; nevertheless, “They constrained Him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them” (Luke (24:29). What a thrill when they discovered that the stranger was Jesus! In spite of their weariness and the lateness of the hour, they hurried to tell the other disciples that Jesus was risen. What joy was theirs because they had constrained Him! “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). To this we might add that the two disciples from Emmaus entertained the Lord of angels.

The young in Christ are often an inspiration in Christian living. Lydia at Philippi, immediately on her conversion, sought to demonstrate her new life by showing love to those of the household of faith. “And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us” (Acts 16:15).

These examples are only a few of the many in the Bible which indicate the practical teachings of Christianity.

Turning to the general subject of Christian giving, we might ask why the Lord enables us to work and to earn money. Certainly not to imitate the miser, nor to watch our bank account grow, but rather to prove our salvation by distributing to the necessity of the saints (Rom.

12:13). How specific the Word of God is, “Let him that stole (before his conversion) steal no more (because he is a Christian): but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). Our Lord devoted Himself to constant untiring service for others. Let Him be our example.

Finally, “He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity” (Rom. 12:8). “Not with eye-service, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph. 6:6). “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord” (Col. 3:23).

Teacher Training (May 1963)

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Don and Jean Jeffery

Although the service of the Lord on foreign mission fields is often fraught with difficulties, there is one advantage at least that is not enjoyed so widely in the homeland; that is the ease with which the preacher usually can gain an audience. This is especially true with children. Primitive societies offer little or nothing for the pleasure or training of their young. An invitation to sit down in a sunny spot to hear stories and sing songs is regarded as pure delight by most youngsters. What an opportunity this is for the sowing of the precious seed of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! How great is the need in so many unenlightened lands! The population explosion is nothing new in areas such as Central Africa, as far as the birth rate is concerned. Children abound in every village, but they go untrained, undisciplined, and untaught in every subject matter from A to Z. Where does the Christian worker begin in trying to reach these little ones for the Lord? Let us give you a quick sketch of a typical situation as might be found in any African or, for all that, in any rural, primitive Christian village.

The sharp clanging of two pieces of iron sounds the hour for “school” to begin. From a cluster of fifteen or twenty mud huts come running a multitude of little children. Some jostle along with a younger brother or sister strapped to the back while others straggle down the path, mute with awe and apprehension at the white visitor who has come to their village to speak to them. They all enter a larger mud brick structure, a school

meeting room. It is a roughly built affair without doors or windows and well ventilated by the gaps left in the walls. The roof is grass and not completely water-proof. A locally made table stands at the front of the room to serve as a lectern. On the floor before the table are arranged in orderly fashion a dozen or so peeled logs which serve as benches for the congregation. The Sunday School hour passes in much the same way as it would here in this country. Once seated, the children begin to sing choruses in their own language. The tunes are western, not native to them. The missionary relates a Bible story, possibly with the help of visual aids, and teaches a Scripture verse to be committed to memory. When the time is gone the visitor takes leave of the village or returns to the mission station. He hopes to revisit them the next week. More times than not he feels that what is being accomplished is but a fragment of what should be done. Distances are long and time is short, and the villages are numerous and the workers so few, that many villages lie unvisited, unreached by the Gospel. The need that still remains is overwhelming!

Yes, one may very well ask the question “Does this begin to meet the spiritual needs of the little ones?” Another question also arises concerning the employment of the worker’s time. Actually there are problems encountered in that one hour of ministry which can be magnified many times by other varying related facts. Perhaps the greatest is the unfathomable need of one child. Let us explain briefly. Although the offspring of Christian parents, he goes untaught in the basic virtues of life. Dishonesty in word or action, for example, is considered no great sin in a primitive culture. After all, one serves well to hide the other. Such a child is lacking in the

elementary teachings which seem to be the natural endowment of those born into a Christian society. There is not much self-discipline practised amongst such people. These basic elements that form the primitive way of life are a real detriment to the progress of the things of God and double the burden of the teacher. Add to this the further situation of the high rate of illiteracy that prevails in rural areas, and the irresoluble fact of the different skin, language and culture of the missionary which creates an instant barrier between races. The need is overwhelming indeed.

The solution to these difficulties is really quite obvious. The children are best instructed by their own people, of course. A born again national teacher with a first hand knowledge of their young, with the innate and much coveted ability to “think black,” and with a perfect command of his native tongue, would undoubtedly make a far better teacher than any foreigner. Where do such teachers of confidence come from? Some are produced by mission schools. Each Christian village usually has one or more young literate believers who have been educated in both secular and spiritual matters at a mission-sponsored school. In returning to their villages after completing their education (as far as funds will permit), they can easily see the need amongst the children, but very definitely require encouragement and instruction before they will do much about it.

This very situation has presented itself frequently in Africa, and has been met with some measure of success by the holding of training classes for prospective native teachers. The missionary meets periodically with a group of willing believers, each of whom represents a village. Bible lessons are previewed for the following

two-week or monthly period. At these sessions there is also the teaching of new hymns and choruses, pointers in basic teaching methods, and, most important of all, suggestions are given on how to give a clear presentation of the Gospel. The national teacher goes out, in turn to his or her village class, teaching the lesson as it has been given previously to him. In this way many children hear the Gospel and are taught the Word of God, yet a minimum of the missionary's time has been consumed, and that efficiently and effectively.

Wondrously, the Word of God is a two-edged sword that blesses the hearer, as well as the user. The blessings of such a procedure are surely of a double portion. The teachers are taught the Holy Scriptures through the lesson and thereby grow in their knowledge of the Lord and are stimulated in their service for Him. This, in itself, contributes greatly to the building up of the indigenous Church which is one of the long-range goals of most missionaries. The other blessing is for the little ones in their receiving consecutive Bible teaching.

Sunday School work in primitive countries seldom runs as smoothly as it does in the homeland. Time is of little consequence where people do not use calendars, much less clocks. Funerals, rain, or any other excuse will quickly cancel a children's meeting, and an average of twenty-five sessions out of fifty-two per year is considered usual. The "do or die" attitude is not prevalent in tropical countries where humid weather fosters lethargy. A second or third repetition of one lesson may frequently occur, but this can be regarded as an advantage for repetition serves to impress a point in the mind of a child. Undoubtedly this procedure of teacher training is not flawless, but it does have merit

and is being used to reach many who otherwise would know little or nothing of God's great plan of free salvation.

There is a similar situation to be found in this country where a small assembly with a large Sunday School work must use, as teachers, young Christians who themselves are not yet fully taught in the Scriptures. Can parents be sure that their children are receiving clear and accurate Bible teaching while under the care of an untrained teacher? The teacher training method could be put into effect by the superintendent or any other able brother. The teachers also should be instructed in the use of visual aids, and how to reach the child at his own level, etc. Training sessions also stimulate and encourage teachers in this service for the Lord when spirits ofttimes lag, and enthusiasm wanes.

The most important facet of the teacher training program has been reserved for a closing point. Never should organized preparation be allowed to usurp the power of prayer in making God's message to mankind a vital and quickening force. Rather, first and foremost, teachers here and abroad should be made aware of the great privelege that is theirs to commit their service to the power of the Spirit of the living God.

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8).