

Finding the Needs Is Finding God's Will and Your Ministry

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing **of myself**; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. (John 8:28)
For I have not spoken **of myself**; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. (John 12:49)

In the Bible Jesus followed the authority and will of the Father in Heaven. What did He do? He went about and did good--He healed the sick and helped the poor and preached the Gospel. He cast out the devil and went about finding the needs around Him.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

This is meant to be the driving force behind ministry. Ministry means to serve God and serve others. It is the driving force behind the love of God.

The NT Church did the same--they were simply imitating what they saw Jesus do, but on a collective basis. Jesus Himself worked on a collective basis--the collective basis of apostleship---from the beginning of His ministry He worked with a small group who He said he was an equal with and who He prayed would do all He did....

And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. (Luke 22: 25-27)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; **and greater** works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. (John 14:12)

The NT church is seen in Jerusalem with what many try to make into a repetitive giving plan. ..

Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet..... (Acts 4:34-35a)

But if we see this action in it's fullness we see they were not just give repetitively to the church leaders, they were giving to the need--to the poor in Jerusalem.

Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. (Acts 4:34-35a)

We need to see these actions from the perspective of the need in order to see it from God's perspective.

It's so simple--there were poor people in the church in Jerusalem, so God was leading some people to give to them. This is not a rule of repetitive perpetual giving, but an action that is meant to take care of a need...and if this ministry is successful it will continue until the need is fulfilled.

We can verify this by seeing that in 1Corinthians Paul tells the church to take up a collection the 1st day of the week.....

1Co 16:2* Upon the **first day** of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. (1Corinthians 16:2)

Again this verse taken out of context has been used for centuries to make it seem as if Sunday is the "official" day

of collecting money--and therefore meeting--and that this action must be done as a law. (tradition makes people see the Bible legalistically!) But if we just read into this same letter we see Paul's purpose--the need God has lead him to fulfill--which is:

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me. (1 Corinthians 16: 1-4)

The Corinthian church was giving to the poor in Jerusalem. It's the same need that was in the book of Acts but from a different perspective. If at some later date there was a drought in Corinth the church in Jerusalem (if they were following Jesus example correctly) would then collect and give to Corinth.

You see it's the need that is meant to drive the giving practices. This is how God is meant to lead the Church. He needs us to change our practices according to the needs around us.

Think of Jesus extremely simple advice about giving.....

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: (Matthew 6:1-3)

Certainly tithes, offerings, or any form of repetitive giving does not fit this advice! Traditional Christian tithes and offerings are done within a format of meeting that exemplifies the Jewish temple/synagogue--is done before men. By it's nature, since it is pre-ordained and repetitive, tithes/offerings are a decision that limits giving and makes a future plan for resources to be directed toward the church (most of which goes toward the physically church building).

Giving for Christians is extremely important--it is meant to be one of the most important ways we find God's will and enter into ministry--into serving His will. But His will is that none should perish.....

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any **should perish**, but that all should come to repentance. (2Peter 3:9)

His will is for the poor to be fed and the naked to be clothed....

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matthew 25:35-40)

It's very clear from the Bible that we are meant to give as God leads, to the needs of the Gospel!

Also consider what Jesus taught about giving and needs--that the needs of today are sufficient...

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they

spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6: 24-34)

I think that most people think of this as personal advice---but that really does not fit or make sense--should we as individuals only be concerned about today's needs for ourselves and not care about tomorrow? No I think Jesus is speaking about giving to others as ministry--that we ought to be completely open to the needs God shows us, that are around us today--and not be saving for tomorrow in a way of repetitive giving.

Tithes or any form of pre-ordained giving is guessing Gods' will in advance. I think that many justify this practice by saying that the leaders of the church did not ask for or do not demand or preach tithe. These practices come into church groups not necessarily from the teachings of the leadership but often just by people deciding to tithe. And it usually comes from fellowship---people really love their pastors (and the service they give to people is of course a good ministry) and just want to help out the church. There are millions of a "light-bill" Christians--people who feel their part in church is to pay the light bill for the church building. It is a good heartfelt concept--but someone needs to point out that they are sitting under the lights they are paying for--in other words they are paying themselves--and not giving to the Gospel.

And since tithe is pre-ordained giving, it is a commitment that does not change to Gods' will or the needs that might change all around us. Pre-ordained giving stops ministry --and it stops the Gospel. I know that so many will argue that tithe spreads the Gospel, but it serves to set up human authority within the church and is most often giving to oneself instead of direct Gospel giving. And ultimately and most importantly it serves to redefine ministry within the church....pre-ordained giving is a way of leaving God out of the picture and in fact giving away one's own ministry.