



HAPHAZARD VS. BIBLICAL GIVING

Love vs. Need Motivation

by Rev. Thomas Soltis



Sunday Morning Scenario

It's Sunday morning. Mom is scurrying to get herself and the children to church on time. She can't find her church envelopes. Her husband, half asleep in bed, mumbles: "They're in the top drawer of the dresser." Fumbling with the envelopes, she hesitates. "What amount should I give? I haven't been to church for a couple of weeks, so I'd better give a little more than usual. Besides, I hear the church budget isn't being met and a special drive is on to repair the parking lot. Since my funds are tight, I'll increase just a little this time and divide the amount - half to the budget and half to the parking lot." Mom is a haphazard giver. To help meet church needs, she sometimes even "robs Peter to pay Paul."

Meeting Needs

Needs should not be the motivating factor in giving. The *needs* of the Jerusalem Christians were not *motivating* factors for the Macedonian Christians when they generously responded with gifts beyond their ability. Their Christian faith and love for Jesus was. (2 Cor. 8:1-5) The needs in Jerusalem simply indicated where they could exercise their Christian love. Today, the needs of the church and people throughout the world are overwhelmingly immense. The annual budget of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod for the fiscal year (July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013) is \$64,626,022. Is that amount enough to meet all the needs throughout the world? Of course not. The 2013 SELC District budget is \$588,150. Is that enough to accomplish all that could be done? Hardly. Multiple millions would not be enough for synod and districts to accomplish all that should be done. There is no end to need.

Needs as Indicators, not Motivators

A frequent mistake among churches is to use needs to get members to give when Christian love should be the sole motivator. Needs are simply indicators of where to exert Christian generosity. Using needs as a motivating factor

can actually end up counter productive. Some may minimize their perception of what is needed and end up giving less than they should and could. Again, those motivated by the church budget, may donate only "their fair share" by making comparisons with the contributions of others. Church budgets as motivators can actually limit giving because they often reflect *minimum* needs of the church and therefore pull down the level of potential giving. Love motivated giving, on the other hand, focuses on *the need of the giver to give* (out of love to Christ) rather than on *the need of the church to receive* (to meet the budget).

Biblical Giving

Haphazard givers, who sometimes end up giving "left-overs" for whatever-when-ever, should heed the instructions of the Holy Spirit in the Holy Scriptures and engage in Biblical giving which essentially is:

- > **Love Motivated** - (2 Cor. 8:8)
- > **Proportionate** - Percentage of income (1 Cor. 16:2). A tithe (10%) is suggested (Matt. 23:23).
- > **Generous** - Beyond the tithe as a love offering. (2 Cor. 9:10-11)
- > **Regular** - Every Sunday (2 Cor. 16:2)
- > **Cheerful** - Exuberant generosity (2 Cor. 9:7)
- > **First-fruit** - A priority. God-giving is first on the list of expenditures (Prov. 3:9)

A Dialog with Jesus

Christian: "Lord what do you need?"

Jesus: "I don't need a thing. I own everything."

Christian: "What would you have me do?"

Jesus: "If you wish to love me through giving, help meet the needs surrounding you."

Christian (dejectedly): "If I gave away everything I have, it wouldn't make a dent in meeting the needs of the Church and the world."

Jesus: "I don't expect you to give away everything. A loving, regular percentage and a little extra, if you're able, will do."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

www.selc.lcms.org - Stewardship

Poster: "Christ Centered Giving"

Personal: "Stimulate Stewardship with Love"