



Servant's Corner

June 2014

What Is Christian Benevolence?

By Rich Henderson, Love INC Director

Benevolence seems to be trendy these days. It is now viewed as “cool” to do something to help our fellow man. Rock stars give concerts to benefit humanitarian causes. Movie stars promote their favorite charities. Even atheists are giving more to charitable causes recently. The Federal Government has been in the charity business since the Great Depression. Benevolence work is a common expectation in the major world religions. So, what sets Christianity apart? What does a benevolence effort that is **distinctively Christian** look like?

It is a question that deserves our deep consideration. When a person asking for food gets help from a church with a food closet, how should their experience be different than if they went to a secular food bank? Is putting a gospel tract in the bag of groceries from the church sufficient to make it distinctively Christian? What is **Christian** benevolence?

I'm not going to answer that question for you in this article. I urge you to study the Bible on your own for answers. In the coming months, I'll share some conclusions I have come to from my study of this issue in future Servant's Corner articles, but for now, I encourage you to do your own study.

I will give you this—Christian benevolence is done **with** Jesus. A simple illustration might help. I recently put a Dogloo (a plastic igloo-like dog house) for my Golden Retriever, Sophie, on the back patio. I figured it would give her welcome relief from the sun in the coming summer months. I noticed that she hadn't ventured into it. I decided to induce her to go in by throwing a piece of bread inside it. As much as she really wanted that bread, she couldn't bring herself to go inside. She was just too scared. What made the difference? I had to go inside the Dogloo with her. (I'm glad no one was watching! The sight of a 53-year-old, 6'1", 250-pound man trying to squeeze through the opening would have been hilarious.) Once I went part way through the opening, Sophie mustered up the courage to go all the way inside and get the bread. Jesus promised to be **with us** always (Matt. 28:20). That is the starting point of Christian benevolence.



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