



Servant's Corner

May 2014

The Need For Discernment

By Rich Henderson, Love INC Director

It's not uncommon for churches to adopt a "one size fits all" approach when it comes to helping people in need. An example: "When people ask for money, our policy is to give them a \$20 Safeway Gift Card they can use to buy groceries". That might sound good on the surface, but it could be going against a direct command of Scripture. Paul told the Thessalonians, "if anyone will not work, neither let him eat." (2 Thess. 3:10). To give free groceries to someone **unable** to work could be very appropriate. To give free groceries to someone **unwilling** to work rewards laziness and demeans their dignity as a person created by God to get a certain degree of self-esteem from working. Our "charity" could be going directly against what God is trying to do in their life.

Investigation and discernment are needed to do benevolence work in a God-honoring way. In Job 29:16 Job says, "I was a father to the needy, And I investigated the case which I did not know". The truth is you can't know how to cooperate with what God is doing in a person's life without asking a lot of questions. Is the man holding the "Homeless Vet" sign really homeless (not to mention a veteran)? Will the dollar you give him really go for food or will it go to feed an addiction to alcohol? If it will be spent on alcohol, can we really picture Jesus saying in Matthew 25, "I was an alcoholic and you gave me money for liquor"? Wouldn't this sound more likely, "I was an alcoholic and you helped me get in to Cityteam's Recovery Program."

Look at the need for discernment behind these commands of Paul, "And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men." (1 Thess. 5:14). It would be harsh to admonish the fainthearted. Likewise we wouldn't want to encourage the unruly to continue to be unruly. Like a good doctor, you have to take the time to hear the person's story to get the right diagnosis before you can prescribe the right remedy. May the Great Physician give us discernment to bring His remedy to those we help.



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