

# Many Christians fail the test of helping the needy

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Dolly Webber • January 3, 2010

For true believers in Jesus Christ, the entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:14) Jesus elsewhere described this as "doing for others what we would want done if we were in their shoes." How much imagination does it take to know what that means? Jesus said that if you do this, you will go to heaven. And if you do not, you will go to hell. Was he too simplistic? Jesus explains it fully in Matthew 25, dividing sheep and the goats according to this one factor -- how they responded to those in need right where they live.

Which way will you be heading?

Where are the Christians of Springfield heading? For anyone claiming to be a Christian, this is not just "something to keep in mind." This is a literal "litmus test" for salvation!

I John 3:16 says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, How can the love of God be in him?"

Rhetorically the question begs the answer -- "It can't." The coming year will be treacherous for many people. Yet ironically those who have the most to worry about are the believers who think they are fine but already failed this test in 2009. Giving to the "needy" is the only context of "giving to God" that Jesus ever taught about! Scriptures tell us that "If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord, and he will repay you!" (Prov. 19:17) "He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses." (Prov. 28:26)

The prosperity preachers have stolen this "seed faith" idea from promises intended for people in need, and they have made themselves rich off of them! The early church took Jesus' instruction very seriously, and there was "no needy person among them." People sold their extra possessions in order to meet their brother's needs. How many needy believers are there "near" you?

Jesus tells us to settle problems with each other before settling our "problems" (sins) with him! Treating other people by his standards is God's highest priority for us. (Matt. 5:24) When one person suffers (cannot make their rent, their child needs new shoes, car needs repair or they have no car), the whole Body is supposed to suffer (endure, undergo, support, "keep") right with them. (II Cor. 12:26). Yes, we are to be our brother's "keeper"!

So do Springfield believers respond by giving to the needs they run into? Or do they pretend they didn't hear, change the subject, or suddenly "have to go"?

Springfield, 2010 will be treacherous for many of you. Those experiencing material need will have great sorrow "today"; those that pass them by will go on to much greater sorrow "tomorrow."

**Dolly Webber lives in Springfield.**

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