

# Care For Those In Need

## The value of compassion

We are accustomed to living in a society in which the weak are cared for and the needy are provided for, at least to some degree. That is not true of every human society. Survival of the fittest and an acceptance that the strong take the spoils are also common philosophies. Commitment to care for the needy is a significant feature of the remaining Christian influence in our culture. In this study we look at the Biblical requirement to care for the needy and consider what this means for the church, society and individuals today.



Pray for clarity to see whatever God wants to reveal to you during this study

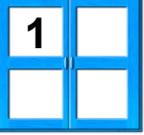


Share with the group an experience you have had of being cared for in a time of need. What form did that care take and who provided it?



Discuss the share of responsibility for the care of the needy that should be taken by each of the following:

- The State
- The Church
- Other community organisations
- Family members
- Individuals themselves – through savings, insurances, etc.

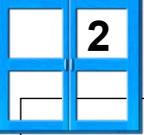


### God's Concern for Human Needs

Genesis 8: 21 – 22      After the flood.  
What does this tell us about God's provision for the needs of humanity?

Psalm 146: 7 – 9      What does this reveal about who God cares about?

Proverbs 14: 31      What does this suggest for those who seek to serve God?



### Jesus on Caring for Those in Need

Luke 6: 17 – 26      Blessings and Woes.

What does this passage suggest about how Jesus felt about those in need?

Why does Jesus challenge those who are not in apparent need?

Matthew 25: 31 – 46      The Sheep and the goats.

What does this passage suggest about the consequences of assisting or ignoring the needy?

Why does Jesus give this such importance?

How might the church and individual Christians live out this teaching?



## The Early Church and Caring for Those in Need

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Read: Acts 2: 42 – 40  
and Acts 4: 32 – 37

We looked at these passages about the life of the early church in a previous study, but we look at them again in this study to focus on a different question.

What do these passages reveal about how the early church cared for the needy?

NB Acts 4: 33 – 34 includes the statement “God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them.”

What does this verse suggest about how God works in a Christian community and about how God expects a Christian community to work?

Acts 6: 1 – 7 about food distribution

What does this passage reveal about the culture of identification of needs and response to needs in the early church?

What does v.7 suggest about the connection between the caring ministry of the church and the evangelistic ministry of the church?



## The Apostles' Teaching on Caring for Those in Need

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What do the following passages reveal about the importance of caring for the needy?

Galatians 2: 10

1 Timothy 5: 1 – 16

James 1: 27

1 John 3: 17 – 18

In what ways does our society do well in caring for those in need?

In what ways does our society fall down in caring for those in need?



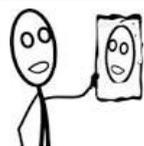
What has this study revealed about the nature of God?



What new thought or understanding has come to you during this study?



What issues, questions or practical implications for your local church, your church denomination, or the wider Christian church, are raised by this study?



*(This section may be used for personal reflection alone or may be shared within the group)*  
What have you done recently that has been an intentional support for others in need?

How big a part is the care of the needy as an expression of your personal faith?

What would have to change in your life for this to have the importance that Jesus gave it?



Spend some time as a group praying over what you have discussed, asking God to bring into focus how you may respond to his Word in an ongoing way.



**More Bible passages and discussion questions for further study:**

2 Corinthians 8: 13 – 15

This is part of one of the passages that speaks of the collection Paul arranged to support the Christians in Jerusalem who were facing a famine.

How are we to interpret Paul's use of the word "equality" (in verses 13 and 14) ?

What does this imply about God's view of how resources are to be allocated?

Quite often the church is approached by individuals seeking monetary support for a personal need. How should such requests be responded to?

What criteria do you think should be applied by governments and other bodies when allocating scarce resources to competing needs? e.g. allocation of scarce medical resources.



**Notes on some of the passages referred to in this study:**

Genesis 8: 21 – 22 These verses come at the end of The Flood narrative and describe God's promise to withhold from again sending such widespread punishment on humanity. V.22 is a poetic description of the productive order that God has built into the world. Ch.9 goes on to establish God's covenant with Noah and his descendants.

Psalms 147: 7 – 9 This psalm expresses how trust is better placed in God than in any human authority.

Luke 6: 17 – 26 This passage comes within a chapter in which Jesus makes a number of statements that reflect God's values and expectations. The Blessings and Woes are followed by the weighty instructions to love our enemies, not condemn others, bear good fruit in our lives, and a warning to put Jesus' teaching into practice.

Matthew 25: 31 – 46 When this refers to 'the nations' being judged it is not referring to political states, rather 'the nations' is a reference to all people. In light of the rest of Scripture, this passage should not be interpreted as suggesting that our salvation is earned through our good works; rather it is a statement that if we are truly followers of Jesus then the genuineness of our faith will be reflected in our active concern for others.

Acts 6: 1 – 7 In Jerusalem there were Hebraic Jews (Hebrew speaking) and Hellenistic Jews (Greek speaking). Both groups were represented in the first wave of new converts to Christianity. This passage refers to a perceived problem about the way food was being distributed between these groups, and how the problem was solved.

Galatians 2: 10 Paul refers here to his discussion with the church leaders in Jerusalem about what was to be expected of the Gentile Christians that he was ministering among.

1 Timothy 5: 1 – 16 At that time a woman could not easily provide for herself; a widow was especially vulnerable to facing potential hardship. Care for widows is, therefore, a frequent theme in Scripture.

2 Corinthians 8: 13 – 15 In a later study we will look more fully at all the passages that describe this collection for the Christians in Jerusalem and at what instruction that gives about Christian generosity.