

Gracious Giving

Yvette Crowell

Mundelein, Illinois

In the book of Acts there are certain activities in the believer's lives that are documented for us because they are significant examples of how to live the Word today. In Acts, chapter 2 we read,

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayers. Then fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47 NKJV)

When you look at these verses and really think about each phrase and what it meant to live that way, it tells you so much about what believers valued in life and how those values directed their behavior. For example, verses 44 and 45 state:

All who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

One activity in which the believers eagerly engaged was that of gracious giving. They looked upon one another and saw the beauty of their love for God; how they responded to God's calling with true belief and loving actions bound them to one another. They knew when a need was present in each

other's lives and they did what they could to help. This is such an important key for today's believers to understand, because it sometimes isn't enough to pray and think that God in some mysteriously divine way will meet each and every need that arises in the lives of His people. God does meet our needs, but many times he is at work in the believers to move toward a brother in Christ in a way that will supply their lack, and bring comfort and courage.

There is a story about a little boy who was in his bed at night during a bad thunderstorm. The young boy was scared and called out to his dad for comfort. His father came into the room and took his son into his arms and said, "Don't worry. There's nothing to fear. God is always here with us." "I know" said the little boy, "but right now I need someone with skin on to hold me." In many ways that's what you and I are when you think about it. We are God with skin on. You were made in the image of God. You carry in your spiritual character the strength, tenderness and compassion of God. He is there in you to help you give to others. This makes gracious giving an exhilarating experience!

Our attitude in giving is of crucial importance. As God our Father has shown us, our giving should be done"

1. freely (Romans 8:32b – "*shall He not...freely give us all things.*")
2. lovingly and graciously (John 3:16 – "*God so loved...that he gave His only begotten Son*")
3. richly (1 Timothy 6:17b – "*...God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy*")

As we give, God's wisdom can guide and direct us in our understanding of what and where to give. As we obey God's will He will work in us "*both to will and to do for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).*" It is also encouraging to know that he

enables and strengthens us “*with might through His Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16b).*” If we truly wish to honor God with our money and material possessions (Proverbs 3:9, 10) as we give our offerings in church and our gifts to individual believers, He will show us exactly how to do this.

Each and every one of us has been given an extremely high and holy calling. Before time began God gave us this calling. As 2 Timothy 1:9 tells us, “*God...has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to*

His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.”

God has a plan and a purpose for your life today; do you know what it is? Will you spend time in prayer today asking God to show you now what you can do, where you can be a gracious giver to fulfill His purpose? What activities are you pursuing that imitate those of the first century believer in order to bring glory to God? Gracious giving is an exciting part of our Christian privileges and responsibilities.