**Responsible Benevolence**

**Reading – James 1:19-27**

People need to realize that the church has responsibility ONLY when family can't, won't, or is non-existent.

**most charity falls in the realm of Personal responsibility.**

When should we be giving? At every opportunity. ***(Galatians 6:10 NASB) So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.***

Every "bono fide" opportunity does NOT apply to panhandlers & freeloaders. ***(2 Thessalonians 3:10 NASB) For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat.***

Why should we be giving?

First of all to show our compassion - ***(Acts 20:35 NASB) "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'***

Furthermore, we are commanded to give to those less fortunate. (***James 2:8) If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well… (James 2:14-17) What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? {15} If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, {16} and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? {17} Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.***

Notice the admonishments to the INDIVIDUAL in the following passages:

1. ***(1 Timothy 5:16) If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.***

2. (***Ephesians 4:28 NASB) Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.***

3. (***2 Corinthians 9:6 NASB) Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.***

The biggest mistake in giving is expecting something in return. ***(Matthew 6:1-4 NASB) "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."***

**Where does my responsibility lie?**

My first responsibility is to my family***. (1 Timothy 5:8 NASB) But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.***

***(1 Timothy 5:16 NASB) If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, let her assist them, and let not the church be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.***

My next level of responsibility is to my brethren. ***(Galatians 6:10 NASB) So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.***

***(Acts 11:29 NASB) And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.***

Then I still have a responsibility to others outside of Christ. How? ***(Matthew 25:31-46) "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. {32} "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. {33} "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. {34} "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: {35} 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; {36} 'I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' {37} "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? {38} 'When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? {39} 'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' {40} "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' {41} "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: {42} 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; {43} 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' {44} "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' {45} "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' {46} "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."***

Listen to God's Promises.

1. ***(Ecclesiastes11:1 NASB) Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.***

2. ***(Galatians 6:7-10 NASB) Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.***

***3. "They that were ready went in with him to the marriage" to the others..."I don't know you" (Matthew 25:13 NASB) "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. (KJV adds "wherein the son of Man comes.")***

***James 2:13... For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.***

**Where does the Church fit in?**

What is the purpose of the church? First & foremost the church is to provide for the **spiritual** development of its members.

Notice again that the scriptures teach the church as a collective to relieve Christians only.