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We, as individuals or as a local church, have limitations in being able to help others financially or otherwise materially. Some people only think of the church as a source to obtain such help. They are not interested in that which pertained to the spiritual needs of man. We're reminded that many ceased to follow Jesus when He stopped providing them with physical food. The scripture states: *"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him"* (John 6:66). The Apostle Paul also charged: *"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"* (II Thess. 3:10). We can correctly derive from that passage not everyone who seeks such help merits our providing it for them.

How should we respond to those who come our way for help materially? Unless it is someone within our congregation or other individuals in whom we personally know money should not be given unto them. Often deadbeats go around churches seeking money. They're not really interested in receiving groceries or other types of material help. Such individuals usually use the same hard luck story wherever they seek help. If cash is given unto them then they might use the money to get drunk or buy illegal drugs. While stationed at St. Louis, Missouri in the Coast Guard in 1957 a typical wino looking individual approached me asking for money. I told him that I would not give him money, but if he was hungry I would buy him something to eat at a café. At first, he shook his head no! But when the man realized he was not going to obtain any money from me he agreed. We went into a little "shotgun" café in downtown St. Louis where he ate a bowl of soup in which I paid for. That may have been one of the few decent meals he had eaten for some time.

Our congregation now has a detailed form for those seeking help to fill out. This includes their personal identification such as a driver's license I. D. Honest people with genuine needs should not hesitate to fill it out. Such a form will aid the congregation in checking up on the individual soliciting help. If you tell him to come back later after the church has time to contact his references, etc. chances are the deadbeats will not return. Often such individuals come by the church right at time for the Bible classes or the worship service seeking help. If the men of the church meet with the individual at that time then it can delay the services. The person should be asked to wait until after the worship services before consideration be given to help him. He probably wants to stop by as many churches as possible in soliciting money and/or other types of material help. With very few exceptions most people helped do not bother to contact the church by letter or otherwise to express their thanks for any assistance provided for them. Of the ten lepers who were healed by Jesus only one of them returned expressing his gratitude (Luke 17:11-19).

This is a matter in which we should pray unto the Heavenly Father about. Truly, we should always be willing to help those with genuine needs. On the other hand, we don't want to be taken advantage of by professional beggars.

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BELVEDERE BEACON
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DEALING WITH PROFESSIONAL BEGGARS

Those with a compassionate heart are willing to help those with genuine needs. This is true whether those needs be spiritual or physical. Concerning those needing assistance with the necessities of life our Lord placed emphasis upon looking after the needs of widows and orphans. The immediate family has first responsibility to look after those of their own household. Able bodied men are to provide for their family. The Apostle Paul states concerning this matter: *"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."* (I Tim. 5:8). This obligation includes not only his wife and children but also his elderly parents. For example: the adult children of a widow are to look after her needs and not expect the church to do so (I Tim. 5:4, 16). The local church should be willing to look after those widows of their number who have no immediate relatives. The Apostle Paul refers to them as widows indeed (I Tim. 5:16). Even so, the church is not expected to be permanently charged to look after younger widows (I Tim. 5:9-15). Sometimes a family or individual within the church has temporary needs in which they cannot fulfill on their own. This could include brethren in a region. In the first century the churches of Christ in Judea experienced a great famine. Brethren from other areas sent relief unto them (I Cor. 16:1-2; Rom. 15:25-27; Acts 11:27-30).

Just as a man's immediate responsibility is to those of his household, just so has the family of God to fellow Christians. However, our responsibility extends to those who have not obeyed the gospel. We, of course, are limited according to our ability and resources. Some brethren contend that we, as individuals, may help those who are not Christians with material needs, but not the church as a collective body. Those brethren contend that such passages of scripture as Galatians 6:10 applies to the individual Christian and not to the church. That passage states: *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."* In that same chapter is the charge to support those who give their lives in proclaiming the gospel. At Galatians 6:6, the Apostle Paul commands: *"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."* Question: does each individual Christian personally hand the local preacher his share of their support for him? Of course not, the church, as a collective body, does so. The Apostle Paul commended the church at Philippi for providing him such support (Phil. 4:15-18). In First Corinthians the 9th chapter he emphasized to that congregation that he had the right to expect support from them.

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It is graduation time. Young people are graduating from college, university and high school. Those graduating from college are moving out to life in the real world of making a living. High school graduates are either setting their sights on higher education or starting out in a career. For many, this will involve leaving home for the first time. This a time of great excitement, reflection and anticipation. However, it can also be a time of great and intense trial and temptation where new surroundings and opportunities can bring new occasions for stumbling and falling. We send our precious young folk out into the world with our prayers and our best wishes and, in addition, an earnest exhortation.

In the Bible we read about four young people (most likely teenagers) who found themselves placed in a situation that is not dissimilar from that of our graduates. When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, during the days of Jehoiakim, he carried away some of Israel's finest young people. Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan. 1:6-7). The Bible tells us of Nebuchadnezzar's plans for these Hebrew youths: *"And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king"* (Dan. 1:3-5). These gifted and exceptional young people were essentially going away to school! They were being taken from their homes and their families and were to be brought to Babylon, one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. There, they would essentially become Chaldeans. They were to be trained for three years in the language, literature, and culture of the Babylonians. Additionally, they were exposed to, and were expected to adopt the religion of the Chaldeans, paganism (Dan. 1:7; 4:8). At the end of the three years they would be given positions whereby they would be serving in the king's palace (Dan. 1:4, 17-19). As can be well imagined, these young people were confronted with a plethora of new opportunities and temptations. For example, they had the chance to indulge in the delicacies of the king's table, for them to do so would, apparently, have violated Jewish dietary laws (Dan. 1:5). What were they to do? The Bible tells us: *"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself"* (Dan. 1:8). It would have been so easy for Daniel and his friends to simply give in. After all, their parents would never know, and "everyone else was doing it." However, instead, these Hebrew youths made the tough choice and did not compromise. Ultimately, God would bless these young people for their faith and steadfastness (Dan. 1:17, 20).

That which motivated Daniel and his friends to do as they did is, in fact, the underlying message of the book of Daniel: *"that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men"* (Dan. 4:25, 37). The pagans looked upon deities as being regional beings (I Kgs. 20:28). The Jews, however, believed in the universal sovereignty of Jehovah God. In other words, Daniel and his friends recognized that even though they were no longer in Israel, they were still obligated to be people of their God. Or, to put it another way, they understood that the God of Israel was also the God of Babylon. To young graduates, many of whom are leaving home for the first time, we extend this exhortation and admonition. Determine, like Daniel and his friends, not to compromise or to defile yourself as you enter upon this new phase of your life. And remember that the God of your families and your home congregation is also the God of wherever your education and career might take you in the future.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, Maomi Aaron's sister, Leann Rogers, who is having health problems, and Lanny Niver together with his daughter and son, and Tim Smith.

Congratulations to Matthew Aaron and DeJon Mitchell on their graduation from North Augusta High School last Thursday. We wish them well with their plans for furthering their education. The Wilsons have been out of town on vacation but were back Wednesday night before going to Raleigh, North Carolina to see Cynthia.

BE - ATTITUDES

We're familiar with the beatitudes in Matthew 5. Here are a few additional BE- Attitudes to help you enjoy a better life. . .

BE – content with what you have.

BE – willing to share what you have.

BE – Loyal to your friends.

BE – patient and understanding with others.

BE- strong in the face of adversity.

BE – weak enough to seek God's help.

BE – charitable to those in need.

BE – wise enough to know that only God is wise.

BE – quick to share your smile.

BE – willing to weep with others.

BE – a leader when others are lost.

BE – first to lift up a fallen opponent.

BE – last to boast of your own victory.

BE – sure you know the path, so you will not stumble.

Selected.