

support in much the same way evangelists receive support.

The method of collecting funds is most clearly stated in I Corinthians 16:1-2, a voluntary collection at the regular gathering of the saints to worship.

Summing up, the New Testament shows us four classes of recipients of financial assistance from congregations of

the Lord. They are (1) individuals who are in need of basic physical necessities; (2) congregations who find themselves in similar straits; (3) evangelists who are spending their time teaching; and (4) elders who do their work well in leading congregations.

We may note, as Paul mentioned, that such people are not required to accept support. But if there is a need, Christians should be willing to supply it.

Many questions arise over the contributions and what is and is not appropriate. Those issues are not part of today's discussion. What has been laid out are the specifics of what God has required. A further detailed discussion may benefit us all, but we must start with what God has told us and make sure such issues are resolved in alignment with his word. ~

Morris Fraser

NAVARRE MESSENGER

October 15, 2017

Benevolence

We meet on James M Harvell Rd next to the public library in Navarre. Call for directions and more information (850) 939-8109

Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible Class for all ages_9:00 AM

Morning Worship Service_10:00 AM

Evening Worship Service_6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Class for all ages_7:00 PM

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Navarre church of Christ

8490 James M Harvell Rd
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VISITORS ARE WELCOME!

With current issues of sending aid to victims of recent hurricanes in Texas and Florida, it may be appropriate to review what the Bible says about taking care of others.

The subject involves both those who benefit and how money or donations are acquired.

In Acts 2:44-45, all those who

were Christians – in the first days after the church was established on Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus – had all things in common. Those who had the means shared with those who didn't, even if it meant selling property and possessions (verse 45).

This was an understandable action at the time. Many of those Christians, Jews who

were in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost, came from distant lands. At least some of them did not have access to their own funds as they wanted to stay near others who were enjoying this newfound association in Christ. So they needed places to live, food and other necessities.

We don't have a clear understanding of how long these travelers remained in Jerusa-

lem, but it was long enough that, according to Acts 4:34-37, continual efforts were made to provide for them through sales of lands (Barnabas being a notable example). At some point (Acts 6:1), Grecian widows were being neglected, perhaps because so many others were in need or their care simply wasn't in the forefront of the apostles' legitimate concern of teaching the gospel. Regardless of why the neglect happened, the apostles determined to fix the matter by appointing seven men to oversee that work (Acts 6:2-6).

The efforts to care for the needy were popular enough among the people that well-to-do Christians continually contributed. That gave rise to the account in Acts 5:1-11 of Ananias and Sapphira, who held back part of what they had gained through the sale of their property and lied about how much they had earned, saying they were giving all of the proceeds to the apostles. They died because

of their statements, a clear warning to others to be honest in noting the amount of their contributions.

It didn't matter whether those who gave had a lot of money – it was the thought behind the gift that counted. In II Corinthians 8:1-5, Paul stressed that the churches in Macedonia demonstrated their “abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.” Apparently, even though they were not financially wealthy, they wanted to – and did – help others in need because they were rich in their desire to help others generously.

The narrative in Acts turns from helping those in physical need to the spreading of the gospel to other places and peoples, including to Gentiles with the story of Cornelius (Acts 10).

The issue of benevolence returns on a different plane in

Acts 11:27-30 when the prophet Agabus visited Antioch of Syria warning of a famine to come. Disciples there wanted to help those affected in Judea and sent relief, carried by Barnabas and Saul. We see by this account that not only were Christians helping individuals who were personally known to the givers, Christians also felt it was appropriate to anticipate occasions to provide help to a larger scope of the needy, notably congregations in other places, like Judea and, more specifically but not exclusively, Jerusalem.

The action of helping other groups was considered further as noted in I Corinthians 16:1-4 when Paul asked the Corinthians to collect money for the needy in Judea. He had previously asked the churches in Galatia to do the same thing – namely, when they met in worship to set aside individual offerings each week so that there would not be a large and perhaps a last-minute and possibly disorganized effort when

he arrived to pick up the money.

Another reason for disciples as a group to provide support to an individual is to support an evangelist. This is shown specifically in Philippians 4:8-14 as Paul acknowledges that the church in Philippi “shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving”, and that it was the only one (at least, at that time) to have done so.

Paul did not necessarily depend on churches' support for his physical needs. Acts 18:1-3 relates that he, Aquila and Priscilla made tents. While he did that, he also taught in the synagogue every Sabbath (verse 4) until Silas and Timothy arrived (verse 5). He then “devot[ed] himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.”

Paul could have availed himself of support from other places but chose not to. He

told the elders of the church at Ephesus that he had “coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my needs and to the men who were with me.” (Acts 20:33-34)

He also told the Corinthians he had no need of the things they might have supplied to him (I Corinthians 9:15). The entire chapter is an argument that he had a right to that support but he would not accept it from them.

There is another category of support that often is ignored when this subject is considered. In I Timothy 5:7, Paul asks his son in the faith to “let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” That double honor is considered by almost all biblical scholars to refer to (1) the honor bestowed on the men in office as elders because of their very nature and (2) financial

Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2