

Hands Go! Hands Come!

**“And all that believed were together, and had all things common: And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need”
(Acts 2:44-45).**

The morning after the Day of Pentecost, a crisis arose in the new Church. With 3000 converts added to the 120 who were in the Upper Room, there was now the problem of where to have church and accommodate the new converts. They could not all go back to where they came from. They stayed together to fellowship, pray, and grow in the Apostles' doctrine. All these converts represented a huge need for housing and feeding. Furniture needed to be moved from available homes. People started selling their belongings so everyone's needs would be met.

During those early days of the Church, those converted knew they would have to sell everything they had on this earth. Through selling everything, the need of everyone was met. People with jobs likely gave their wages, and not just their tithes so everyone would have food to eat. Money and property were turned over to the Apostles to use where it was most needed. (Notice who held the money.) Years later, once the needs of everyone were being met, the church in Jerusalem returned to a more normal way of life. Even this system of “common-ism” had its problems as seen in Acts 5:1 and Acts 6:1. It was temporary. It was a system of mutual ownership. God does not require this today. What He does require is a willingness to do this, if necessary. Would you be willing to sell all you have and give it to the needs of others?

They sold all they had because of two basic reasons:

1. Their brothers and sisters had needs and they had blessings to share with them.
2. There was a conviction that Jesus Christ was coming soon. Therefore, there was not a continuing need for material things. Jim Elliot, a missionary who gave his life reaching people said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose!” When we give we are making investments in the Bank of Heaven. Norma S. Scholl said, “Everything we have is really loaned to us. We cannot take anything with us when we depart. If we have no use for a thing, we should pass it on to someone else who can use it-now.”

Paul speaks of the Macedonian churches that were willing to give, out of their poverty, not only according to their power, but beyond. Paul said we should excel in giving. We are to give according to what we have, not according to what we do not have (2 Corinthians 8:12).

“But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that hath gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack” (2 Corinthians 8: 14-15).

In these verses, Paul was saying our plenty will supply what they need so there will be equality (everyone having what they need). This is like the Akan proverb, “Hands Go! Hands Come!” (Nsa kô na nsa aba!) When we have a need others will help.

Other proverbs include: (Some of these have been used in a previous lesson).

- The left arm washes the right arm, and the right arm washes the left arm.
- When two arms wash each other, they both become clean.

Giving

- The fingers of the hand are not equal in length. (Individual capabilities are not all equal.)
- One finger alone cannot lift a thing. (It requires all five fingers in cooperation.)

“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38).

There was a preacher in a church who said, “This church, like the crippled man, has got to get up and walk!” The members shouted, “That’s right. Let’s walk!” “This church,” he continued, “like Elijah on Mount Carmel, has got to run!” “Let it run, preacher!” thundered the people in response. “This church has got to mount on wings like eagles and fly!” And they said, “Let it fly!” But when the preacher said, “If it flies, it takes money” the people shouted, “Let it walk!”

“Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard” (Proverbs 21:13).

“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again” (Proverbs 19:17).

“He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse” (Proverbs 28:27).

“But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17).

In this world filled with people in need, and many times living in poverty yourself, it is easy to say, “I cannot help everybody!” You may be poor but you help somebody.

Remember

HANDS GO! HANDS COME!

I wonder what reward the poor churches of Macedonia received because of their sacrificial, selfless giving? Their giving came up before the Lord as “a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18). What else happened? They prospered because of their giving.

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

Study Questions

1. Why did the early Christians sell all their possessions and give the money to the Apostles?

2. What problems did this “common-ism” cause? _____

3. Provide some Scriptures for giving to the needs of others. _____

4. What are some proverbs that can be used in connection with giving? _____

5. What was the reward or promise given to the Macedonian churches that gave? _____

