

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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Purpose-Driven Finances- Adopted to Meet Needs

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The closing lines of an American spiritual read: "And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love." This song echoes the teaching of Jesus. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another...by this all men will know that you are My disciples" (John 13:34-35, NASB).

Rick Warren outlines five purposes that God has for every person in The Purpose-Driven Life (worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship). This series applies those principles to our finances so that our money management can strengthen our spiritual life. To recap so far:

- Worship - Created to be stewards
- Ministry - Equipped to be partners
- Evangelism - Saved to value people

Fellowship - Adopted to Meet Needs

What shocks you? What surprises you so much that you have to stop and make sure you understood it correctly? Apparently, Jesus thought that love shocks the world. There are certain themes that are constant throughout every generation: power, greed, sex, lies, and betrayal. Jesus taught that selfless love makes self-preoccupied people stop and take notice.

Fifty "one another" verses in the New Testament teach Christians how to get along with other people. Evidently, you can't become God's kind of person by yourself. Because God is Trinity, living in community is part of His very essence. God also created mankind to enjoy life in community (just like He does).

Fellowship is not a synonym for a church social where food is served. It is a way of life. God expects us to verbally encourage other believers and to reinforce our words with actions. In a sense, we are God's hands to help care for the needs of others.

This is dramatically illustrated in Acts 2:44-47. A new group of Christians was ostracized from Jewish culture. If they did not take care of their needs, no one else would. Because of their love, they sold their possessions and began sharing with each other (45). They ate meals together and just had plain fun (46)! This kind of love shocked those who saw it. God used this shock to help people see their need for Jesus Christ and true Christian community (47).

You have been spiritually adopted into God's family (Eph. 1:5). But, you are not an only child and have not been adopted to be spoiled. God wants you to contribute to the health of the family. Growing up, my family often vacationed in central Florida near a lake that had great fishing. A few years ago, I went there with my brother and found the fishing was devastated. The locks leading out of the lake were closed. The lake poisoned itself because it lacked fresh water. God wants you to be a channel of blessing, not a reservoir of selfishness who keeps everything for yourself.

So what do fellowship and meeting needs look like in the real world? I have a friend who developed a budget for his family that set aside money each month to have people over for meals, meet physical needs, give to special projects, etc. This was over and above his regular church giving. Through this couple, people were encouraged and lives were changed.

In this world, using your time and money to meet someone's needs is counter-cultural and shocking. But, "they'll know we are Christians by our love."

BBC Foundation has been ministering to churches and individuals regarding biblical stewardship since 1992. Send your questions on finances and stewardship to: BBC Foundation, 538 Venard Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411. Phone: (800) 451-8668, website: bbcfoundation.org; e-mail: info@bbcfoundation.org