

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Supporting the Saints
Scripture: Romans 16

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 1 July 10th, 1994

Your Value to the Body

Introduction Today I want to begin a little series from the pulpit on the subject "supporting the saints." Now, I see in our body a need to talk about finances, or "stewardship" on a regular basis. In the past we have shied away from saying too much about money. But I find that a problem that happens then is that people are not instructed about what the Scripture teaches about giving, and they are in fact, **mised**. Giving is both a responsibility of a Christian--every Christian--and an act of worship. But to talk of giving of money alone would be out of step with how the New Testament speaks of finances. The NT always speaks of finances in the framework of the need for Christian people to support one another. That is a biblical way to look at how we give, whether it is financially, giving your time as a volunteer, using the spiritual gift you have been invested with, etc.

Giving as part of "supporting the saints: (overhead)

SUPPORTING THE SAINTS

Your value/ownership/resources/feelings/expectations/
learning/levels of motivation

You are needed and if you are a Christian you are **valuable** to the body of Christ. You are valuable in many ways, and one of those ways is as a supporter of the work financially. That is only one way, but it is not an insignificant way. And in these summer months I want to look at your and my **GIVING** in the context of our overall **SUPPORT** of the Body of Christ.

Now, I never cease to be impressed with the wonderful variety of people the Lord places into the church. He brings us all kinds of different people. He brings us people of different personalities, different upbringings, different parts of the country and sometimes different theological "bent." I enjoy the diversity we have and I would never want us to all be from the same mold. And it is our intent and strategy to engage every Christian who is part of us in the ministry of the Gospel. It is true that folks have different *capacities* to minister but **no** one is *not* needed and everyone who has been truly saved in Christ has been equipped with at least one "tool" or spiritual gift to use for the rest of their lives in some corner of the Body of Christ.

<u>Verse</u>	<u>Saint</u>	<u>Reason for Value</u>
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1,2	Phoebe	a helper of many, a deaconess at C.
3,4	Prisca & Aquila	workers in Christ, risked their necks, hosted a house ch.
6,12	Mary	hard worker
	Persis	hard worker
12	T & T	workers
7	Andronicus & Junias	willing to suffer, pre-P. apostles
5	Epaenetus	an early convert
13	Rufus & Mom	"choice"
10	Apelles	"approved in Christ"
5,6, 9,12	others	"beloved"

Observations in Romans 16

Now in Romans 16 we have a chapter that rarely gets looked at. But I think it is one of the neatest chapters in the book. There are twenty nine specific people mentioned in the first 15 verses. That in itself is interesting because so far as we know Paul had never yet visited the church at Rome. But he knew a great deal about them and evidently knew a number of people who had moved to Rome and become part of that assembly. Although he did not know most of them personally, he was apprised of their VALUE. Scan the chapter with me...

<u>Verse</u>	<u>Person</u>	<u>Reason for Value</u>
1,2	Phoebe	a helper of many & of Paul, an "officer" of the Cenchræa (near Corinth)
3,4	Prisca & Aquila	workers in Christ, risked their necks for Paul, hosted a Roman home church
5	Epaenetus	distinguished as an early convert
6,12	Mary	hard worker
	Persis	hard worker
12	Tryphaena & Tryphosa	workers
10	Apelles	"approved in Christ"
13	Rufus & mother	"choice"
7	Andronicus & Junias	willing to suffer for Christ, pre-Pauline apostles (special)
5,6,9, 12	Epaenetus, Ampliatius, Stachys, Persis	"beloved"

In verse 16 Paul wrote *Greet one another with a holy kiss...* He had great affection for these people, some of whom he had known, had worked side by side with and were now transplanted to Rome. The thing I want you to see today is their great VALUE in Paul's mind. Surely in this group of twenty-nine names there was great diversity. They were not all the same kinds of people-they were different. But they were of great value to that church and Paul esteemed them as such. Their names have gone down in history as valuable saints, each for their own contribution to the cause of Christ.

They were valuable first of all, because of their great value to God Himself. I was listening to Dr. Paul Meier on *Focus on the Family* this week. He challenged the listening audience, as a psychiatrist, that each Christian needs to FOCUS on his or her great value to Christ. We need to revel in it. We need to immerse ourselves in every fresh reminder of it that we can find. Because *we tend to forget it!* We tend to

get bogged down in depression or "burn-out" of loneliness or self-pity or any number of other things that can make us forget that to God, we are of immense value.

The saints are valuable secondly, because each of you is a recipient of at least one spiritual gift that God has given you for use wherever you are, in the body of Christ. We need your gift. If we don't have the benefit of the gift and skill that God has given you, we are impoverished. We need to have use of the resources that God has given to the church.

If someone has the gift of teaching, we need it.

If someone has the gift of mercy, we need it.

If someone has the gift of administration, we need it.

If someone has the gift of giving, we need it.

If someone has the gift of helps, we need it.

There is no gift in the church that is UNneeded! God does not give gifts that are pretty but basically useless, like some kind of glassware that sits and collects dust but you would never really use...

Third, you are valuable in this ministry because you are unique. I believe one means of JOY in the Christian life is the *diversity* that there is. We are not all the same and if we had a church of all-the-same people, it would be extremely boring. You offer the body of Christ a unique saint, with a unique testimony, a unique experience of seeing God's grace unfold in your life and unique abilities. No one is exactly like you and no one can do just the kind of work for Jesus Christ that *you* can do.

Fourth, you are valuable to the body because of utilitarian reasons. You fill a "slot." And if you are not there, you are missed. Some of you are missed more than others when you're not there because you're further along in finding your place of ministry, or you have made yourself more available. But everyone is needed and when you are not there, it makes a hole in the ministry. It's like that in any good church that seeks to "enfold" every member. In smaller churches the holes that are created tend to have a bigger impact, but do you know what? Most churches are small in this country (under 100 members) and so most churches live with the reality of always trying to make up for the "holes" created.

When the saints cease supporting the work financially, for whatever reason, it makes for less resources that the church has to work with. Your faithful giving, along with your availability and your skills make each of you here a very valuable part of the body.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Supporting the Saints
Scripture: Nehemiah and Acts 2:44 and 4:32

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 2 July 17th, 1994

"Ownership" and its Impact on Giving

Introduction This is a series I am calling "supporting the saints." One of the things we learn when we become Christians is that we are now part of a larger group of people. It is called the "body of Christ." That "body" exists all over the world and the local "branches" are what we call "local churches." As part of the body of Christ it is our privilege and our responsibility to SUPPORT each other.

We support each other with prayer.
We support each other with encouragement and affirmation.
We support each other with our skills. And
We support each other with financial sustenance.

You know, I feel it is a blessing to belong to a good church. I enjoy the feeling I get from all of the signals I receive that I "belong" here. I feel needed. I feel wanted and accepted. I feel a "kinship" to the members of this church and the foundation of that is the "kinship" I feel with all believers in Christ. But locally, right here at 52 Morton Avenue, I appreciate the enrichment in my life that I receive (and, ashamedly, take for granted sometimes) by being part of the body. I feel like this is not just some *church* that somebody put up eons ago. I feel part of the *life* of the church, a part of the family of believers here. I feel like I "own" the place, along with you. You may be tempted to interpret that as due to the fact that I work here, but I have felt that way about every church that I have joined. I like having a key. I like fussing about how the joint looks. I like performing my function as part of an overall whole and being faithful to the plans we make and the dreams we share. When I first became a Christian, the whole idea of "body life" in a church was new to me. And I reveled in the little church that I attended.

I remember getting one of my industrial engineering project groups to take on my church as a project we had to accomplish and we studied the church as if it were a factory and worked up a whole master plan for expansion and the most efficient ways to use the building. Maybe it was a little bit of over-kill for a small church, but I was excited about that church, even though I was only 20 years old, and I wanted to have a part in seeing it move forward.

There are two books of the Bible where I feel "ownership" really comes out. One is Nehemiah and the other is the Book of Acts. For those weeks and months, these believers felt like they "owned" the ministry. It was theirs. They felt a particularly strong sense of *holding title*. It is that feeling that I wish for every member of DBC to possess.

Ownership in Nehemiah Now the book of Nehemiah chronicles one of Israel's brighter periods. The book details a 52 day period when Israel re-built the walls around Jerusalem during the fifth century BC. Key to the success of the project was Nehemiah's leadership. He, himself, exhibited humility, integrity, patriotism, energy and unselfishness. And he was surely a *motivator* for the project. But what I want you to see today is the *people's* sense of OWNERSHIP of the project and there are some evidences of that--

2:17 Here N. states his vision to see Jerusalem's walls re-built, but at the end of the verse he said *that we may no longer be a reproach*. That evidences the desire for respect. N. is not a resident of the city but he feels a loyalty and the need to boost and enhance the standing of God's people before the world. Here is a man with some pride in being identified as part of the "body."

3:28-30 In these verses the people did repair work *in front of his own house*. The motivation was high because the work was attached to each family.

4:6 In this verse N. observes that *the people had a mind to work*. That's because they were motivated and felt a distinct sense of ownership for the project. It was *their* city that needed protective walls. They put their resources together, planned the job and *completed* the job.

Ownership in Acts When we turn to the NT we come to the Book of Acts. Perhaps the most often flipped-to chapter in Acts is chapter 2. There is an excitement that many Christians feel when they read Acts 2 and we often wish we could recover many of the things we read about there. As we read in vs. 44 we read *all those who believed were together, and had all things in common*. There was a communal necessity to how they were living and they were experiencing a *joint-ownership* of all the young church's assets. We do not know how long the Acts 2 feelings lasted, but they were sweet for a while. They experienced that feeling of identity and "holding title" to what they had and that was because they had all experienced together the wonder of resurrection power!

In 4:32 we see a healthy *counterbalance* in ownership. There Luke comments that since the saints were *of one heart and soul* their sense of ownership was not privatized! Healthy ownership does not rope off one piece for my own private

possession. Sometimes people--even Christians--can get funny this way. Their good sense of ownership *mutates* into something which says, "This group is MY group. This job is MY job. This pew is MY pew." Those kind of feelings are the flesh, dear ones, and not the Spirit and we need to guard against them...

Ownership Today Now, I believe the Holy Spirit wants to produce in us, as part of a healthy growth cycle, a sense of ownership for the ministries which we are involved with. This is not just for DBC. Wherever you are and whatever fellowship or assembly you are part of, this feeling of ownership is something you need to develop. Let me share some *implications* of ownership:

Ownership means:

the dreams are yours
the decision-making is yours
the victories are yours
the mistakes/lessons-learned are yours
the impact is yours
the joy is yours
the confidence is yours

This is not something we have none of here. We DO have some of this and I am thankful for it. Evidences of ownership here include the whole practice of membership. We're spending time this summer in adult Sunday School painting a picture of what "meaningful membership" means. Second, I see "ownership" in the leadership and control of specific ministries (Heirborne, Awana, small groups, SS classes, music, Salvation Army support team). Third, consistently plugging in with your spiritual gift - when you go from having only a casual interest to consistent support and functioning IN a ministry, then you are starting to "own" it.

As we grow though, we need growth in the sense of ownership, too. We cannot afford for very many people to feel detached and like spectators! Here are some needs for more OWNERSHIP that I see us having in the near future:

New building construction
New small groups
New officers
Worship team
Numerous administrative tasks (bulletin, phone coordinator, missions coordinator, etc.)
Financial development

Now, I feel that the key to having enough finances in a church to do the job (whatever the job is) is for the people to really and truly have the ownership of the ministry. They will give to what they sense is theirs. And this is where membership

can be a useful thing--people who feel like they really belong are going to feel more responsibility and will enjoy giving more...

Support of the saints will happen when there is a sense of ownership. This is *your* building. This 1.3 acre chunk of land is *your* church-grounds. When you join this church these are *your* missionaries. The little bit of money we have is under *your* stewardship as to how it will be used...

Impact of Ownership on Giving: Now, finally, "ownership" has a big impact on giving. We have been seeing a decline in giving here over the past two years despite seeing an increase in the number of people, or at least while ministering to the same number of people. The decline in giving is probably due to several factors. But one of those, I feel, is the fact that not enough of you feel a sense of ownership. If you feel like you are a needed part of the ministry and that this ministry is yours, then you will be more highly motivated to give. I would like to believe that all Christians all the time give just out of strictly biblical and NT motivations: sacrificially, systematically and cheerfully. But there are other motivations too which are appropriate. And ownership of the ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church is one of those good motivations. What is yours, you tend to care about. And so if there is a strong feeling of lay-ownership here then that will show up in these ways:

- Greater giving
- Greater accountability
- Wiser decisions will be made
- More can be and will be accomplished

I hope you will allow me to speak openly about our finances. It is important to provide the body with instruction about giving from a biblical standpoint. And it is important that you feel as much a part of the body as possible.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Supporting the Saints
2 Corinthians 8

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 3 July 24th, 1994

Your Resources in the Body

Introduction Each person here is blessed with certain resources and assets that God has entrusted you with. That is a distinctive part of the Christian way-of-looking-at-things; to view *all that I have* as having been GIVEN to me by God. It is godly to consider all that you have as, ultimately, not *yours* but His.

That being the case (once you have that settled in your mind), we can talk about the task of "supporting the saints." It is not a little thing to get past, though! It is a significant change in thinking--as I say, a step of true godliness--to start to think that way. The Lord Jesus Himself said that He *did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many* (Matt. 20:28). It is a big step to fully realize that MY SATISFACTION is not the biggest goal of life. As a Christian, I am a redeemed bondsman of a loving God. I have been purchased. And (praise God), I am also equipped now (spiritual gifts), and empowered (by the same Spirit) but the goal of my life is to serve HIM, not to serve myself. Dear ones, that is a distinctively *Christian* way of looking at things... And to receive that message and to internalize and personalize it--to take *ownership* of that idea for yourself; well: that is a significant step. Until that is settled any talk of giving or supporting the saints or taking honest inventory OF your resources with a view to how you can better utilize them for Christ is premature... But **that being settled in your head**, we can then move on to talk about "supporting the saints" *but not really until then...* Some of you have it settled. You know that all you have is His and you are commissioned as a *steward*, a "store manager" of certain resources. Others of you, THIS is the one thing in this sermon you will take with you, and this isn't even really today's sermon yet! But we have got to get past this "check point" or donating time, contributing talents, giving offerings, etc. are not in their right context--they're in the context of SELF otherwise... So, let's consider something Paul said to the Corinthian believers. In the NT the central passage on *giving* is 2 Cor. 8 and 9. That is the *central* place you go to see what God expects of you (although it is by no means the only place where using our resources for Christ is addressed...)

Now in 2 Cor. 8 Paul tells the Corinthian believers about the Macedonian believers. In verse 5 we read that the Macedonian believers *first gave themselves to the Lord*. You and I must do the same. We need to FIRST give ourselves to the Lord. We need to surrender our

lives to Him. I believe that all giving is an act of worship (in fact let's call that a "root" principle):

"ROOT" PRINCIPLE #1 for "supporting the saints":

GIVING IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP... and we see this all through both the Old and New Testaments. In the NT we see the widow giving all that she had and that since she gave it in love and worship, it was pronounced profound by Jesus (Mark 12:41-44) We have a touching story in Acts about the Antiochan disciples sending an offering to the Judean brethren for famine relief (Acts 11:29), *each...in the proportion that they had means*--why? Because they loved Jesus and therefore they felt deeply for Jesus' people. And we even have "pagans" worshiping Jesus by giving--with the magi... When we give it is supposed to be out of worship, and that is why I believe that we should give weekly, not just when it's convenient. Telling Jesus that worshipping Him in this way--in *any* way--weekly is just too inconvenient is to reveal that I do not yet understand that worship comes out of love for Him²--that's worship. He deserves it!

In Philippians 4:17 we read an interesting thing Paul said to that assembly concerning giving: *Not that I seek for the gift itself, but I seek the profit which increases to your account.* The second "root" principle about giving in the NT--about how we use the resources we have--is that giving is necessary to experience God's richest blessings.

"ROOT" PRINCIPLE #2 for "supporting the saints"

GIVING IS NECESSARY TO FULLY EXPERIENCE GOD'S

RICHEST BLESSING I am not saying that unless you give faithfully of your time, your money and your abilities you will not experience *any* of God's blessings. I *am* saying that if you want to sense God's fullest blessings on your life you will be in the habit of worshipping Him with everything you have and that you will actively support your fellow-saints out of your deep love for Him. When you make that practice part of your *lifestyle* you cannot help but experience a deep feeling of God's blessing on your life. Exactly how does that take shape? I cannot say all the ways--but for the saints who give of themselves out of support for God's people, every one I have ever met has been able to specify a number of special ways they have experienced God's goodness and grace. We do not give to get. But when we give, we cannot escape God's rewards. This leads into another principle, which I think will comfort you--

"ROOT" PRINCIPLE #3 for "supporting the saints"

YOU CANNOT GIVE WHAT YOU DO NOT HAVE

In 2 Cor. 8:12 we have an interesting verse. In verse 11 he was talking about the Corinthians finishing a giving project. It is good to finish what we start. It is short-sighted to give up *before* a project is finished. But from verse 12 I take it that the Lord holds you and I accountable to support the saints based on what we *have* not on what we do not have. It is out of the storeroom of what we already have obtained and possessed that we give--whether it is finances, time, or spiritual gifts or energy.

Now, here's the question. How much do you have? Well, we're all equal in one respect: we all have 168 hours per week. If you subtract 7x8 hours/week (56) for sleeping, we all then have 112 waking hours a week. If you then subtract 40 hours/wk. for working, we all then have 72 hours/week to ourselves. If you subtract 2 hours/wk. for Sunday morning worship (1 hr. for worship + 1 hour for travel), we now all have 70 hours/week to work with. We all have the same. We all make choices about what to do with those hours. How much money do you have? Well, we may differ a little here. But if you make an average of let's say \$20,000.00 per person, and give (let's say) an average of \$5,000 back to Uncle Sam (and Uncle Bill), now we each have \$15,000/year to work with. If you take \$12,000 out to live on (a thousand a month), then you each have \$3,000 to decide what to do with. How much of it will you use to support the saints? In terms of your energy and abilities, you also make definite choices each week about how to use that energy and those abilities. How much of them will you use to support the saints? It is your choice, and the choices reflect the quality and the depth of your worship. We cannot use for Him what we do not have. But from what we have we definitely make choices about how to use it for Him... The fourth (and last) principle for supporting the saints is to support them according to the NT. I believe that the NT gives us three guidelines (and legislated tithing is not one of them).

"ROOT" PRINCIPLE #4 for "supporting the saints"

NT GIVING IS "SCS" In the NT giving is sacrificial, cheerful and systematic. That is the biblical way to give. "Tithing" is just not prescribed, unless you take Jesus' statement that the Pharisees should have focused on the weightier matters of the Law and performed the other aspects too (of which tithing was one) as fully prescriptive for NT believers too. Jesus did not abolish tithing specifically. But I believe that *sacrificial giving*, especially for US today, will involve greater giving than tithing. For you to give sacrificially--meaning doing without something important--what would that mean for you, dear ones? And all our giving is to be done cheerfully. I honestly believe that to the believer who gives grudgingly or out of a sense of teeth-gritting obligation, the Lord says, "better that you keep it than that you contribute what you do not really want to contribute." And the NT enjoins giving which is systematic, not sporadic or just when "the feeling strikes." (Note: our children learn about giving from us). So here is a little strategy to use in supporting the saints:

A Giving Strategy:

Finances	Time	Energy/S.G.'s/Focus
Regular giving	Regular giving	Regular giving
Outreach giving	Outreach giving	Outreach giving
Spontaneous giving	Spontaneous giving	Spontaneous giving

It is God's will for you and I to support each other. He desires us to carve out time for each other, to use our spiritual gifts and energy for each other and to support the ministry financially. My prayer is that even as we do this quietly and carefully, that we will do it aggressively and with great determination because above all else, we feel deeply compelled to give back to the God who sacrificed His only Son for us

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Supporting the Saints
Scripture: Philippians 1

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 4 .August 7th, 1994

Your Feelings Towards the Body

Introduction We have been talking about the idea of Christians supporting one another. It is a tricky subject. It's something we *do*, quite a bit. We are as supportive a church as I have ever been in. We support one another in prayer. We support one another emotionally in times of trial--although some of us have very high expectations in this area. We support one another to some extent with physical labor. And some of you support the Body financially. Some of you do this last part of supporting the saints cheerfully, sacrificially and systematically.

The goal we need to have is to be progressing from having a CASUAL interest in supporting one another, to having a SERIOUS interest in supporting one another. And one of the keys to bridging that gap is rooted in your feelings to the Body. Now, I would like to believe that your personal commitment to active support of the saints is somehow immune to your current set of feelings about the Body. I would like to believe that, and I would like to promote that kind of maturity. I would like to think that Christians in general are so overwhelmed with gratitude JUST with what the Lord Jesus has done for them, that they support the saints faithfully and unreservedly just as a matter of course and conviction--that their support doesn't rise and fall with their feelings about the saints. I would like to believe that. But unfortunately, that is not how it always works. The kind of support that is given by the saints TO the saints usually rides the crest of how you currently FEEL about the Body. So today I want to talk with you *about* the matter of how our feelings affect our support of one another, in terms of both advantages and disadvantages. It is a key factor. And to *transcend* instability in our support structure as a church we need to understand the factors that come into play. Your PARTICIPATION in supporting the saints is controlled by

- your closeness to the Lord on a personal level to some extent.
- It is controlled by the amount of time and energy and finances you have available.
- It is controlled by the degree to which you are *aware* of the needs the saints HAVE for support.
- And your participation in supporting the saints is controlled to some extent by how you feel about the Body.

Here are some of things I have heard in recent months that evidence different feelings people have about our church:

- 1 *I'm so happy to have found a home.* 2 *I feel accepted.*
 3 *I'm a little irritated that my need was ignored.*
 4 *I would do anything in my power to get to that Wednesday night prayer group if I was physically able.*
 5 *I'm frustrated with this building. We don't have enough space.*
 6 *This sure is a friendly church. 7 This sure isn't a very friendly church.*
 8 *I wonder what a visitor feels when so few go up to them and introduce themselves???*
 9 *We don't do enough fun things.* 10 *I sure love the preaching.*
 11 *Does the preacher ever get to the point?*
 12 *Would you be willing to have me become a member?*
 13 *Membership is too risky.*
 14 *AWANA AWANA AWANA; Heirborne Heirborne Heirborne! That's all we ever hear about...*
 15 *The merger was the best thing that ever happened to us.*
 16 *Pastor Lou and Janie really left a hole in this church; I don't have anybody in my life like them.*
 17 *I don't know how we'll get along without Ron and Cheryl.*
 18 *If Pastor Neil wasn't here, I would find another church.*
 19 *I don't much care who the pastor is; I'm here to worship the Lord.*
 20 *We're swimming in babies! 21 When are they going to fix that sound system?*
 22 *I can't stand topical sermons-- I like verse-by-verse exposition from the pulpit.*
 23 *I'm bored with this church. 24 I'm excited about what God is doing here.*
 25 *It's freezing in here. 26 Boy, is it ever hot in this room!*

My commitment to the Red Sox rises and falls with their win-loss record. But my commitment level to the Texas Rangers does not. I was a fan of the Rangers all the way back to when they were the Washington Senators. I am only a Johnny-come-lately (eleven years) fan of the Red Sox. But I have an undying loyalty to the Rangers. My feelings are not the same about these two ball clubs. My interest in the one is casual, and rides with the

sense of success I seem to perceive in Boston. My basic interest in the other is detached from who is playing, who is coaching, what the uniform looks like and even with where they are in the standings.

In the Bible, we have two pictures of how believers support one another. We have how *it should be* and how the Holy Spirit is working to *make* it be. And then we have glimpses of how it *was*, sometimes. I know I've said this many times, and I say again that one of the things I love most about the Bible is that it always tells the truth. When God's people were "at the top of their game" the Scripture records it as such and celebrates the victory. But when God's people blew it, the Scripture records that just as plainly. In the New Testament we have Jesus saying to His disciples ***By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another*** (John 13:35). Supporting one another faithfully is ultimately a love-question. Our support of one another is a basic test of how much we love one another. Let's be honest at least, and not be afraid to look at the truth. When we're honest, we can know where we've got to go. How much do we love one another? A couple chapters later Jesus said these words to the disciples ***You are my friends if you do what I command you...*** and just before that He told them ***This is my commandment that you love one another*** (John 15:14,12). So, loving one another (or not) is an obedience matter. And support of one another and how well and how consistently we do it, demonstrates how much we really love one another.

The resources you have available are 1) time, 2) energy, 3) money, 4) possessions, 5) talents and gifts and abilities. How do we use them in supporting one another? Do we use them occasionally and casually? Do we use them faithfully and consistently and sacrificially and cheerfully? These are hard questions, but I believe it is healthy to ask them of ourselves and to do so regularly. And a key factor in how we use our resources has to do with our feelings toward the Body. Those feelings are funny things. They are tricky, as I say. In Philippians 1 the apostle Paul wrote very candidly about how he felt about that church. One is inclined to think that the church at Philippi held a special place in his heart. In vs. 3 he builds them up by telling them that whenever he thinks of them he is flooded with good feelings. You know what that's like! You have a good friend or maybe even a group of friends in another place, maybe another state... And whenever that friend or group of friends comes to mind you find yourself feeling good. You have nothing but esteem and love for that group. You know that they are not perfect, but still you love them deeply and maybe in times of trial and stress you even conjure up thoughts of that person or group of people to get you through... That's what Paul felt whenever the Philippian believers crossed his mind.

In vs. 5 is a reference, now, to their support of Paul's ministry. He only called it *participation* but it means they were supporting him. They were interested in being involved with him and we know from other references that this did include financial support. In vs. 6 he sees in their support something deeper. He sees that it is part of God's overall sanctifying work in them. In vs. 7 he plainly acknowledges his FEELINGS for them and in essence says "Hey, I feel very deeply for you guys and there's nothing wrong with that because you've stood right with me" (*you all are partakers of grace with me*). And again in vs. 8 he describes *strong* feelings for this church. His feelings back towards the Philippians were, in part, due to their faithful support of him. There was a deep commitment to him that came out of that church. They obviously felt very deeply *for him*.

Now as we say, the New Testament does not "whitewash" the failings of some of the NT Christians either. The apostle James was evidently aware of some incidents of behavior where some believers, even leaders, were showing partiality to certain wealthy people and giving them the preferential seating (James 2:1-6). Apparently some believers were not always interested in giving even and equal support to one another when there were more beautiful people around. In the extreme the whole church at Ephesus apparently had deteriorated in their feelings toward God Himself, as the Lord Jesus "faxed" them a message to that effect in Rev. 2:4... Back in Philippians, we have Paul acknowledging another FEELING that they had for him, *I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now you have revived your concern for me*... Concern is a certain feeling we might have for someone and it comes and goes.

So with the Scripture as backdrop on the FACT that people had different and sometimes *changing* feelings about their churches, let me say something about how our feelings about the church affect the way we choose to SUPPORT each other in the body. If you feel good about the ministry of the Body, you will want to support the Body. If you aren't feeling too good about your church then you will find it hard to contribute "your time, your talents or your treasure." In terms of financial support, it is interesting to sit in on a group of pastors talking about the giving trends in their churches. Pastors notice different kind of trends that occur. And sometimes they are not above *finessing* those trends to achieve a maximum yield! I remember a few years ago being told by an older pastor (no longer in this area) that if I didn't attend a certain seminar on how to get the congregation to give more fully and more faithfully and more consistently, I just would never see my church grow. I reacted a little negatively to that comment, but I understood where he was coming

from. He was a veteran of 30 years of watching the saints support the work of the ministry based on their current feelings for the work. Sometimes the "tide was in" and other times the "tide was out." Sometimes the saints were excited about the work, about how they were being stroked, and other times they were unexcited and they didn't give as much. So what's the leadership supposed to do? *Our* approach has been either to just IGNORE the trends or to try to educate you into giving systematically, sacrificially and cheerfully.

Your feelings about DBC revolve to some extent around a few factors:

- 1 Whether you are being "fed" (whatever that means)
- 2 the Pastor's performance
- 3 the feeling of church "growth" or not
- 4 the degree to which you have encountered frustration
- 5 the degree to which you feel entertained
- 6 whether you see the church as effectively reaching the lost
(and this includes your awareness of our Missions program)
- 7 the degree to which you, yourself, feel *ownership* of this ministry
- 8 How you view the matter of membership
- 9 Whether you feel needed, or badgered
- 10 If this is a place where you have succeeded in establishing
meaningful, satisfying and productive friendships
- 11 If this is an assembly where you sense the Lord's presence

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Supporting the Saints
Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-16

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 5 August 14th, 1994

The Young Christian's Guide to Supporting the Saints

Introduction I have noticed that most people, when they rediscover the church (or discover it for the first time) do not know what is expected of them in the "giving" department. They *hope* it's not too much, and at the same time they feel an urge to help some how. Most people (not all, but most) who come into the church will not be content for long to just sit and absorb the benefits indefinitely without wanting to become part of the process. So they wonder "how can I help?" and "what is expected of me?" and maybe, "will they overtax my resources?" Today I want to say some things to those of you who are young Christians. You may not be all that "young" in years, but if you judge yourself to be "young" still in the faith, this message is for you. (By the way, I frequently hear "older" Christians say that they wish they could *recover* the feelings they had for Jesus when they first came to the faith! So if you are a "young" Christian, be encouraged! The "older" ones often wish they could be new and fresh in the faith again!)

Part of our task in the leadership of our church is to communicate to you what our needs are, so that no one DOESN'T KNOW what is needed. We need to let you know regularly what our needs for volunteers are, what our financial needs are, and where we need gifted people (which is *all* of you, if you are a Christian) to plug in. If you do not know the needs, you cannot be expected to meet them, can you? Let me say that we do need everyone that the Lord sends us. We enjoy a leadership "network" where we have a team of leaders waiting to help you find just the right place for you. We also have a sincere need for everyone in the Body here to participate in financially supporting this work. We do not receive any funds from outside this church. We do not have big bank accounts that we allow to sit and collect interest and then we live off the interest, and then hit you up for extras! The

heat and electricity and missions support, and my salary, and the Sunday School papers and the bulletins are all supported by what is given in the offering box. That's it. That's all we have to work with. And when we lose people, especially ones who were faithful givers, the finances and the talents we have to work with diminish and we need to trust God to bring us new resources just to stay even, let alone to move ahead and do new things.

And we are faced with another problem, which is somewhat new to this generation and common in many churches--but we are facing it too. We are in a time when the number of you who are here every week (or nearly so) is diminishing. Many people are increasingly dividing their time between many interests. The face of the church is changing so that we essentially have one group here one week, and a half-again different group the next week, and the third week a half-again different group altogether. That puts a large portion of the Body largely out of touch with itself and makes the challenge to the leadership to keep everyone informed even bigger. These are some of the conditions we face as we try to have a church where we effectively support each other. It's important I think, for those of you who are new Christians to understand these things--because you are needed; maybe needed even more than you might have been twenty or thirty years ago. Well, enough whining...

Today I want to provide a "Young Christian's Guide for Supporting the Saints." And the most basic guidebook for you to follow is the Bible. Now, you must first get to know the Bible in order to use it as a guidebook. And then you must know how to interpret it responsibly and effectively in order to use it as a guidebook. Getting to KNOW it and learning to responsibly INTERPRET it takes some time. But you can begin immediately. Let's look at a basic passage on "supporting the saints": **Ephesians 4:11-16** that has been read this morning. Now, Christ is the head of the Church (vs. 15). He is the boss; He is the life-giver to the church; He is the Savior of the church. But notice what Paul said in verses 11 to 14. The result of Christ providing gifted leadership to the church is that the members of the church do not have to fall prey to all kinds of "weirdness" and even intentional deceit. There are many opposing influences "out there" which actively and intentionally are working to get us off the track. Some Christians are *tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine and the trickery of men...* But it doesn't HAVE to be that way and that is why you have been given gifted people of God, to establish the church solidly on sound doctrine. And now in verses 15 and 16 we see that with Jesus Christ as the "center piece" of the church--THIS church, Hixville, Faith Community on Martha's Vineyard, First Congregational in

Middleboro, and all our sister churches around--we are to GROW UP in Him. We're not just to remain static. We are to GROW in Christ. How? ***by that which every joint supplies...*** (vs. 16). That's a basic thing to understand for a young Christian as he ponders "what can I contribute?" EACH "joint" supplies something. Time, money, talent. This is such an important verse, I believe, I want to look at it in several translations and get a different flavor in each:

From whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. **KJV**

From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
NIV

For it is from the Head that the whole body as a harmonious structure knit together by the joints with which it is provided, grows by the proper functioning of individual parts to its full maturity in love. **Phillips**

from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love **NASB**

Now "that" which every joint supplies, does what? The various contributions cause the body to grow; the contributions cause the body to mature. To mature in what? Well, we are seeking to discover and become every bit the church that it is God's plan for us to be. We cannot achieve it overnight or even in any one twelve month period. But we are ever-becoming that church. We seek to ***attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ*** (vs. 13). When will that be completed? I don't know, but we keep seeking to understand more and more of His plan for us as we strive to realize verse 13. That demands your participation.

A church body is very much like a physical body, and that is one of the pictures the NT gives us. Each finger, eyeball, toenail, arm and foot is necessary. The foot can't do what the eye can do, no matter how much it may want to. The foot *needs* the eye. The Lord did not make any one person an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist and a pastor-teacher. He gave a *plurality* of these to the church. We need each gifted person that God brings us. And we need as much financial support and time as you can contribute.

Another way of picturing the church is to picture it like a tree. A healthy tree has all of its branches "on line." But sometimes you see a tree that

has "dead wood." It is still attached but it isn't productive. It isn't contributing any longer and it's just there. Such is the state of churches too sometimes, and will always be until the Head returns. But our *goal* is to stimulate every "branch", every member of the body to contribute what he or she can. You are needed.

To close this message for "young Christians" (and this series) let me review for you the three types of giving that I hope to see in every Christian. This is the kind of "giving strategy" that I believe is healthy, biblical and likely to bring back into your life the greatest sense of God's blessing. Let me also say that there are Christians who would resist this strategy. There are some who always resist any talk of giving from the pulpit--they are usually those who do not give, or not very systematically. And there are those who want to be told that a strict tithing system is what is expected of them: 10% off the top of everything... A "flat tax" approach. Well if this strategy flies in the face of others I cannot help it. This is what I believe is biblical and healthy and what we should all practice and model and "mentor" for each other.

Regular giving
Outreach giving
Spontaneous giving

Let me close with Paul's words in ***Not that I seek the gift itself but I seek the profit which increases to your account*** (Phil. 4:17). Supporting the saints is ultimately a reflection of worship. How and when and with what feelings you support the saints, ultimately reflects how you feel about the Lord Jesus, Himself. ***He ^{said:} You are my friends if you do what I command you...this is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you*** (John 15:14,12).

Dear ones, this church needs your time, financial support, prayer support, spiritual talents and membership. You can open your heart to this appeal. Or you can harden yourself to it. It is your affair, between you and your Savior. We will never ask you to short-change your family's real needs for the church. We will never ask you to subordinate yourself to some kind of abusing, controlling religious intimidation. We will never ask you to support extravagance.

I ask you to seek the Savior in how and when you support the saints. Will you do that? Not just here and now, but each and every week. How much is the support of the redeemed--your redeemed brethren--worth to you?

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

FROM THE TEACHING MINISTRIES OF
DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH



Series: Supporting the Saints
Genesis 27-30-40

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
July 31st, 1994

Giving the Blessing

Introduction We have just enjoyed a Dedication ceremony in our Adult Sunday School hour. It is special to witness the deliberate and determined commitment of eight Christian parents to raise their little boys (five of them) under the sound of the Gospel and in the faith of Jesus Christ. The ceremony of "dedication", of course, does not guarantee the eternal salvation of these five young men. Eternal salvation is something that can be obtained only by personal faith. And as much as most parents wish they could do something on behalf of their children that would win FOR THEM their forgiveness for sin and a certain future in heaven, it is just that: a wish. It doesn't work that way. Salvation must be appropriated *personally*, and these eight special parents have decided to do everything they can to provide their boys with the knowledge, the desire and the good sense to flee to Jesus Christ for salvation and to do so early in their lives. They have committed themselves to earnestly pray for their boys, to demonstrate the reality of Christ before them as best they can, to love *each other* in their marriages to the uttermost (for this will provide the best possible environment for the boys to see what love is) and to begin praying NOW for those five young women who will in all likelihood become the eventual spouses of these young men. They have committed themselves to do these things. They cannot *win* for their boys their salvation. But their prospects of seeing their boys find Christ, seek Him and really love God are high if they stick to the things that they have committed themselves to. The future is bright for these little guys if their parents continue to walk with Christ!

What the Blessing Is I have become aware that one of the key things in whether a child *wants* to seek the Lord when they are older is if they have "received the blessing" AS a child. Gary Smalley and John Trent wrote a book about eight years ago on this subject. The book is called *The Blessing* and it centers on the biblical idea of receiving the blessing from your parents. The passage we have read in Genesis 27 is the central passage in the Old Testament on this. There we have the old man Isaac about to pass on his estate to Esau. But Esau's younger brother deceives Isaac and obtains the "blessing." Now the story is full of interesting twists and turns and it raises a number of questions. But today I want just to examine the IDEA of the "blessing" and how it has impact on our children. You know, "passing on a blessing" or BEING a blessing is something that marks Christians from other people. The verse of the week in your bulletin tells us this: *Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult but giving a blessing instead, for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing* (I Peter 3:9). Because we have inherited the great blessing of knowing Jesus Christ, we are equipped to GIVE blessings to those around us.

Now here is John Trent's idea of what the BLESSING IS--think of this in terms of family life. Think of it in terms of how you were raised and then think about how you are raising your children:

When during a specific event, or over a season of time, five powerful elements come together which COMMUNICATE deep acceptance and unconditional love:

Deep acceptance and unconditional love are communicated by

1. *Meaningful touch*
2. *Spoken words*
3. *Expressing high value*
4. *Picturing a special future*
5. *Active and genuine commitment*

There is the spiritual picture of blessing all through the Bible. We see it in Genesis 27 that we have read some of today where kissing and embracing are signs of blessing. In Genesis 48 the right hand is used to bless. In Exodus 17 raising the hands or arms is a sign of blessing. In 2 Kings 2 there is the touching of clothes. In 2 Kings 4 there is the touching of one's staff. Jesus knew that others needed to touch Him (Mark 5:28; Luke 7:39). He healed the leper in Mark 1:41 by *touching* him. In Matthew 8:15 he touched a woman to relieve her of a fever. In Matthew 9:29 He healed two blind men by *touching* them and a deaf man by touching his ears (Mark 7:32). He calmed the disciples' fears by touching them (Matthew 17:7). In Luke 7:13 He touched a young man's coffin and called him back to life. And finally, He called for Thomas to "touch" His scars (Luke 24:39) to receive a blessing of assurance. Meaningful TOUCH is a sign of acceptance and love. There are physical blessings from being touched in meaningful ways and there is emotional bonding that comes too. Many people in nursing homes experience a profound need to be touched.

When children visit in nursing homes they sometimes fear they might "break" one of the residents and might be hesitant to touch them. But that might be the biggest need they HAVE, for the lack of it for such long periods.

Then the blessing is communicated by what is SPOKEN. In Proverbs 18:21 we read *Death and life are in the power of the tongue*. We are verbal creatures. What is SAID means a great deal to us. And with our children, they take to heart how we speak to them. As adults we take to heart what we hear! In your family, is what is spoken to each other a blessing? This means learning to choose what you say with some care. It means *eliminating* sarcasm and pessimism. It means, maybe, NOT talking about hard things when the little children are around. It means talking openly of the Lord and what HE is doing. It mean reading God' Word aloud for each other and to each other. It means addressing each other with kindness and affection and tenderness. For some of us these things were so much NOT in our upbringing that we can scarcely imagine what it would be like! But in the Lord NEW PATTERNS are possible.

A third element of blessing is the expression of high value. When we defer to each other in line, when we open doors for each other, when we care for each other when we're sick or

injured, when we act like we feel privileged to BE with each other, these all communicate high value. It isn't just in the family at home. It should be in the family here in the Body of Christ. You see, we so urgently need to sense the blessing from EACH OTHER too. And how we treat each other here needs to be with VALUE.

Then there is the prediction or picturing of a special FUTURE. In Genesis 27:28,29 we see Isaac practicing this. In John 14:2,3 Jesus made sure His disciples knew that they had a special future ahead of them! It is communicating that you EXPECT your child to do well and that you are fully expecting him or her to succeed. You know what? They might just believe you!

The fifth element is ACTIVE COMMITMENT to the other person (today we're thinking about our children). John Trent suggests actively committing yourself in two ways:

Commit the person to the Lord. That is what we do in a "dedication." The parents first of all commit *themselves* to the Lord to BE committed Christian parents and then they "present their child before Him and acknowledge that the child is the Lord's, ultimately.

Commit your life to their best interests. That is a big decision. We are quite interested in our *own* interests... And to decide to be actively committed for your *spouse's* or your *child's* best interests--that is a significant way to communicate the blessing.

There are so many cases we know of or have personally experienced that the blessing was absent. But as Christians we can pass on the blessings we have known from the Lord to our children by relating to them the ways that He relates to us...