



## *Beyond The Scrooge Syndrome*

BY BECKY COMBEE

For years it has been a joke in our family that some people are so frugal they can spend a dollar in three different stores. Politely, we would say they were thrifty, but the truth is probably greater than that simple explanation. Sometimes, they are just holding fast to every dollar because in earlier years their basic needs were not met. Among older folks, this fear is called depression mentality, and, of course, I can only understand that in a measure. I am certain, however, that when you look need in the face with little relief in sight, it is frightening. Thank God we have learned about His promise of abundant provision.

There are many promises in the Word of God that emphasize God's divine provision. One is the very familiar verse, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup> This is a wonderful promise, yet it does not stand alone. It is only fulfilled when we understand and practice the law of sowing and reaping. When the apostle Paul wrote this verse to the church at Philippi, he recognized that they had given more than once to help meet his need. Certainly, it was because of the gifts they had sown into his life that they would receive an abundant harvest.

Jesus spoke of this principle when He said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you."<sup>2</sup> We note that He did

NOT say, "Keep and it shall be given unto you." Keepers have what they have hoarded or saved with little promise of heavenly return.

Every seed that is planted in the lives of others – every gift given to others – is an investment in our future. If this gift flows from our heart because of our love for God, it does not demand any payback. Yet, payback is inevitable. It is the law of God. Our eye is always on the need and God's leading to supply that need, not on any glorious return. We do not give with our hands open waiting for a reward. We simply yield to the compassion of God with all our heart.

*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another (Rm 12:10).*

In the Scripture, we read that we must esteem or value others as better than ourselves.<sup>3</sup> We also note that we should honor others, preferring them above ourselves.<sup>4</sup> If I esteem you, value you, and prefer you above myself, I put your need before my own. Compassionately, I ask, "How can I help you? What can I do for you?" and these questions are genuine and heartfelt. I am more than a "do for me, give to me, and bring to me" person.

I was told of a lady who went to work to earn

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enough money to buy an appliance that she desperately needed because her husband refused to buy it. His selfishness and insensitivity still baffles me. I remember when I came home from the hospital after Joel was born Wayne surprised me with a dryer so we would not have to hang diapers on the line. I know that shows my age. Some of you have never seen a clothesline or used cloth diapers. But, believe me, this dryer was a precious gift!

God's love must flow from us into the lives of others. If I always insist on eating at my favorite restaurant, watching only my television programs, and talking continually about my job, I am certainly not demonstrating the love of God. The compassion of our Lord is not revealed by my actions. The question posed by the apostle John, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" definitely applies to me.<sup>5</sup>

The day we were born again God poured His love into our spirits. Our lives are a reflection of this love – a love so vast that we can love our enemies.<sup>6</sup> As we walk in this love, we must learn that it is not just perceived by our senses or dictated by how we feel. According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the *agape* love of God "is not an impulse from the feelings."<sup>7</sup> It is therefore, what we do in response to God's command to love one another.

Our obedience to God's command of love was taught by the apostle Paul when he said, "If thine ENEMY hunger, FEED him; if he thirst, give him drink."<sup>8</sup>

Jesus also taught this when He said, "DO GOOD to them that HATE YOU."<sup>9</sup> Both of these references declare that love is an action and it includes our enemies. Through our actions, we choose to reveal the love and goodness of God to all men.

Our feelings are like the caboose of a train. We can drive the train with or without a caboose, but we must have an engine. The engine of our lives is always the Word of God. However, if we allow God's Word and His Spirit to order our footsteps, we will sense His peace and joy. When the train of God's Word leads the way, our perception of His love will follow like a caboose.

This Christmas let us plant God's love in others by giving generously. Let's declare God's love by our actions. I promise that it will be easier than you think! Start with a warm and cheerful greeting. Add that postponed note or visit, and be sure to bake your favorite cake or cookies. Then for the one you love, do that long-awaited chore. Wash and vacuum the car or paint the living room. Some things are BIGGER than an expensive present. Be creative! Love is what you do!

*Merry Christmas, Becky*

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<sup>1</sup>Php 4:19 <sup>2</sup>Lk 6:38 <sup>3</sup>Php 2:3 <sup>4</sup>Rm 12:10 <sup>5</sup>1Jn 3:17 <sup>6</sup>Mt 5:44 <sup>7</sup>G26, Note 11, *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible* <sup>8</sup>Rm 12:20 <sup>9</sup>Lk 6:27

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## *The Ultimate Act of Mercy*

BY SUZANNE D. WILLIAMS

Joseph was presented with a quandary. Take Mary to be his wife and believe the fantastic tale she'd told him or make a public spectacle of her and have her stoned.

That's right. Stoned.

As her espoused husband, it was his legal right. Yet the Bible tells us, he didn't want to do that. So he opted for mercy. (Mt 1:18-21) Deliberately and on purpose, he looked past the wrong it seemed was done to him.

Imagine how Joseph felt that day. This woman he's engaged to comes to him saying, "I'm expecting. Oh, and it's God's child."

*Right. Sure, you are. Looney.*

Yet still, he opted for mercy, giving her plight some serious thought. He wasn't hasty, didn't make a rash decision, but considered her reputation as much as he did his own.

In the end, he listened to his heart and allowed God to direct his path. Though it did take the words of an angel to confirm it in his thinking, he chose to protect her. That's what his decision amounted to. Shelter. Security. He offered Mary the safety of being his wife.

Mercy.

And Jesus likewise offered us mercy, in so doing, following the examples of both of his fathers. The man who'd raised him—Joseph—and Abba God whose power moved through him.

What fabulous examples to live by.