

Step by Step - Section 19

"Do not be found holding out your hands to receive money all the time, but drawing them in as to giving. If you have anything, through your hands you shall give ransom for your sins. You shall not hesitate to give, neither shall you murmur when you give; or you shall know who is the good employer."

In a previous section, I mentioned that any repetition in the Didache, is not random or arbitrary, but is intentional. That the point of repeating any point is to add greater emphasis to that point. The more the point gets mentioned in any text, the more you are to focus upon that point. This is why Scripture places so much emphasis on the point that God is One, that we are to love God with our heart and soul and our neighbor as ourselves. It cannot be mentioned enough. If we are not living and breathing these truths, then we are not being confronted with these truths enough.

This section is a repetition of the information in section 3.

Do not be found holding out your hands to receive all the time
Draw your hands in as to giving
Give a ransom for your sins, if you have anything
Do not hesitate to give
Do not murmur when you give

In the first instruction, in reference to the holding out your hand to receive. This means don't always be in a position of "Want". Always asking for things. Do we always ask because we are always in need? Or is there some other reason we are grasping for the material objects of this world? Notice, the use of the words "All the time". It is not saying you will never be in need, nor that you should never seek the assistance of others or have not worldly objects. But it says "All the Time", that be sparing and prudent about what you ask for in this world.

In the next instruction, the description is "Drawing your hand in as to giving". What this means is that the opposite of being someone seeking a handout, you are someone offering handouts to those who are truly in need. Remember the phrase "All the time". Just as you should not be seeking the material objects of this world all the time, when being generous to others, you do not have to go to a point of poverty to be generous either.

We are to give to all who ask but that does not mean a person says "Give me your house, you car, your bank account, your spouse, your family, your life". That you would be giving any of these types of things. This may sound like a gross exaggeration but in this fallen world, there are far too many people who are only too eager to rob the next person blind and think nothing of it.

There are many elderly people who get scammed by thieves who lie to them and then steal their entire life savings. Is this acceptable in God's eyes? Of course not! And this direction to give to those in need is not telling us to hand over the keys to our entire lives

to thieves. Think of the number of people being scammed by identity thieves and similar scams. The Didache is never saying "Be a patsy or a victim".

We are not expected to question those who ask of us, but we don't have to turn a blind eye and pretend we are not being robbed either. Give to those who are truly in need and there are many. Don't become a soft touch to the predator who would just as soon leave you destitute as look at you. The Didache is not written in a manner of accommodating predators, but to help the disciple navigate this fallen world in a healthy manner.

Think to an area where homeless men, women and children struggle to find shelter or food or warmth. Giving to those who are in need is required. Think to the phony salesman who comes to your door with fly by night schemes and shoddy products telling you that if you buy their products, that it will help them travel the world or go to college or any other rationale, being a disciple doesn't mean being a target. So remember the term "all the time". Do not seek to get all the time, neither do you need to give all them time, get when in need, give when others are in need. That is the point. Give to everyone that asks, but read this as "Every needy person who asks".

For those who are truly in need, we should neither murmur nor hesitate to give what is asked of us. Please fall to the idea that everyone that asks of you is a predator or a thief - this is a horrible generalization and becomes a rationale for being stingy and selfish.

Giving a ransom for our sin is said in relation to "if we have anything". This is also about having but not needing. If we are in possession of wealth but do not use this wealth, and others are in need, then we are accountable as to why we feel we need these objects when others may be dying for lack of them. Materialism is a liability when we stand idly by why others could benefit from what we have sitting around and are not in use.

What to take from this: When I have no need, I will not ask for necessities. When others are in need, I will provide their necessities. I will not hesitate to give to the person desperately in need, nor will I complain about having to give and I realize that static wealth is a burden to my soul.

Practice: Are you in a situation where you find yourself asking others for things you do not need? Are you shopping for items you do not really need? Are you surrounded by items you no longer use? Review your needs. Determine which are "perceived needs" and are actually just "Wants" as opposed to "objective needs". Start to scale back on your perceived needs till you are left with only your actual needs.

Do you currently offer tithes in your House of Worship? If not, now is a good time to start.

Do you run into people who are struggling each day? If so, make sure to help wherever you can. Find out your local charities such as food banks and homeless shelters and offer to help, either in person or by donating where you can.

Give where you can, and giving is not always money, but your time and energy to help others is a great way to give.