



The Proper Motive for Giving Will Lead to Good Donor Decisions

Correctly inspired and informed, the Christian donor will choose wisely how to direct cash to Hurricane Katrina victims

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With the airwaves filled with appeals for those serving the victims of Hurricane Katrina, it is an especially critical time for Christians to consider their motives for giving. For in doing so, they will have addressed the fundamental question that leads donors to consider the proper factors in directing their cash to assist victims of the storm.

Undoubtedly, virtually all who give to the organizations helping Katrina victims are doing so with the best of intentions. However, at least one person has inquired about the tax-deductibility of such a gift; suffice to say here that while almost any organization to which one would give – whether it be a local church, a parachurch ministry or a secular non-profit – would likely be one to which a contribution is tax-deductible, that is not a proper motivation. It is a benefit, but should not be the main motivation behind giving.

What is the proper motivation? Well, a search of scripture will actually reveal several, including mercy, compassion, and love. However, most fundamental is our call to focus the minds and hearts of our family, friends, neighbors and co-workers on God – a task likely to occur more often – and easily – than we might expect, as the inevitable question of “Why?” that escapes all of our lips as we watch the film footage leads people to other questions. Questions about God and mortality and our eternal destinations – questions that many people have long avoided, but can no longer.

In short, we are to heed the counsel of Paul. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). The reason that this is so fundamental, especially in a time of unprecedented death and destruction, is because while such an experience might cause a person to think more about God, how Christians respond will play a significant role in *what* such a person ends up believing about God.

So, as we respond in the name of Jesus, we must do so generously, wisely, and mercifully.

Demonstrate Leadership

More than a week after Katrina made landfall along the Mississippi-Louisiana border, completely destroying cities and leaving more than a million people stranded or meandering refugees, there is considerable criticism being launched at all levels of government. There will be a time for evaluation of the preparation and response of those government agencies responsible for the health, safety and security of the people of the Mississippi Delta; however, now is a time for Christians to take the lead in this effort – as already seems to be the case at many levels, including designating Tuesday, September 6 as a National Day of Prayer.



Others are beginning to work with Franklin Graham and others to turn Graham's suggestion that churches adopt families into a reality. The Salvation Army, Operation Blessing, Convoy of Hope and many, many other Christian ministries have been helping from the first hours, even as their own people were suffering.

By demonstrating calm, by providing relief, by responding with counseling for those just now beginning to fathom the extent of their losses, Christians are doing “it all for the glory of God.”

As Christian rescue, relief and redevelopment personnel move in to serve the victims of Katrina, and as Christians support their activities through cash gifts (and other support as later directed), those impacted will be drawn to the love, mercy and compassion shown by Christians. As a result, God will be glorified.

Indeed, even Jesus acknowledged in prayer the same purpose. “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you” (John 17: 1b).

Support Congregations

On the Wall Watchers educational website, www.thegoodsteward.com can be found numerous articles regarding the issue of tithing. It is for times such as this that it is proven the practical wisdom of such a precept. Just as Joseph stored the grain and was equipped for the drought, churches, if they have been fully supported, are financially equipped to provide cash

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through denominational affiliations

So, check with your church leadership to see if they are connected with those delivering aid, and if they are confident they aid is being delivered with effectiveness, efficiently, and with a focus on fulfilling the Great Commission.

Support Experienced Relief Ministries

There are numerous reputable Christian relief ministries serving in the area, such as those noted above. For a more detailed list, see the MinistryWatch.com Shining Light, "Support Christian Ministries in Response to Hurricane Katrina" at: http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/pdf/SL_HurricaneKatrina.pdf. Additionally, information about more than 500 ministries can be found on this website.

Sunday school students will recall the trials Joseph had to experience to gain the characteristics to be in the position of power he enjoyed and to make the decisions he did so that he could assist the people in their times of need. Similarly, today, the Christian ministries profiled in the Shining Light, and many more in the MinistryWatch.com database, enjoy influence as Joseph did in his day. That is because they are experienced and effective. And they share Jesus. As these experienced Christian leaders and ministry workers fulfill their call, let us hope and pray that the culture responds just Pharaoh did.

"Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you'" (Genesis 41:39).

Be Prepared

In remarks to Wall Watchers and the Christian Emergency Network, Howard Dayton of Crown Financial Ministries noted the importance of Christians being prepared financially should a disaster befall them, and also to be financially free so as to assist others. "It's our passion that God's people get themselves in a position where they can fund the work of Christ and get financially stable themselves," said Dayton. He added, "I do believe, particularly in the way our culture stereotypes Christians as people that say 'No!' all the time, that we have an opportunity to demonstrate what Christianity is all about when we're in a position to help others in need."

Conclusion – Remember our Hope

A United States senator described Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath as being "of biblical proportions." Such a sentiment demonstrates that our national leaders are thinking of God. Undoubtedly, millions of others are as well. So, Christians must set the example. We must heed the words of our Lord to Joshua. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

© Wall Watchers, 2005. Michael Barrick is the Managing Director of Education and Communications for Wall Watchers. You can reach him at mbarrick@wallwatchers.org. To learn more about the ministry's work and read in-depth, expert analyses on more than 500 Christian ministries, visit the ministry's primary website, www.MinistryWatch.com. Photos courtesy of The Salvation Army.

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Links to other MinistryWatch.com relevant articles:

"Stewardship Responsibility of Ministries," including a profile of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/Newsletter/MinistryDirect_June05.pdf

"Exercising Due Diligence for Disaster Relief"

http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/Newsletter/MinistryDirect_September04.pdf

"Exercising Due Diligence When the Needs are Urgent and Immediate"

http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/pdf/Reflections_TsunamiLessons.pdf

"Discernment Required for Wise Giving"

http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/pdf/Reflections_Discernment.pdf

"Financial Integrity as an Authentic Christian Witness"

http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/pdf/Article_012005_FinancialIntegrity.pdf

"Is Ministry Transparency Relevant to Donors?"

http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/Newsletter/MinistryDirect_February05.pdf

"Want to Give? Start Here"

http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/Newsletter/MinistryDirect_November04.pdf



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