

## Another Early Account

Imagine that you were there. Imagine that you were a part of the early church community. What would you have noticed about the community of believers who made up this revolutionary movement? Well, Justin Martyr was there. In one of the earliest historical references to the early Christian community, he tells us what he saw. Listen to his description of life in the early church.

*“And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things...And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who (cares for) the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.”*

The early Church, from the time of inception in Acts, through the initial centuries of its existence was preoccupied with generosity. This week, we will investigate the New Testament practice and theology of generosity.

### Monday – A Challenging Account

1. Please read Acts 2:42-47 (focus on verses 44-45). How do you think this behavior was viewed by those outside the early church community?
2. How do these verses apply to our contemporary church that has gone global in scope and ethnically diverse?

**Putting it into Practice** - What practices or actions would honor the spirit of these verses in our current socio-economic situation?

### Tuesday – Tangible Christianity

*“So that it is not he who has and keeps, but he who gives away, that is rich; and it is giving away, not possession, which renders a man happy; and the fruit of the Spirit is generosity. It is in the soul, then, that riches are.”* Clement of Alexandria

1. Please read James 2:14-17. What good deed does James match with genuine faith?
2. How might James respond to the idea that Christians are called to meet spiritual needs rather than wasting their time or money on physical needs?
3. What does James say about action?

### Wednesday – A Priority From the Beginning

*“The best fruits are plucked for each by some hand that is not his own.”* CS Lewis – Peralandra

1. Today, we are going to look at several Old Testament Scriptures that are consistent with Acts 2:44-45. Please Read Exodus 23:10-11, Leviticus 19:10, Proverbs 14:31, Isaiah 1:17 and Isaiah 58:6-10.
2. What do these verses show about us God’s heart for the needy and oppressed?
3. In Exodus and Leviticus, we discover the practice of leaving part of your field unharvested. What are some modern day equivalents to this practice?

### Thursday – Love in Action

1. Please read 1 John 3:16-19. What themes does this passage have in common with Tuesday’s passage from James?
2. How does John tie our call to generosity to the actions of Christ?
3. How is this picture of love different from our contemporary cultural picture of love?

### Friday – Love Without Boundaries

*“I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditures on comforts, luxuries amusements etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little... There ought to be things we should like to do but cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.”*

CS Lewis – Mere Christianity

1. Please Read 2 Corinthians 8:8-15 and 9:6-15. What is Paul’s economic goal for the Corinthian Christians?
2. As you look at these two passages, what do you conclude are Paul’s principles on giving?

**Making it Personal** - After listing Paul’s principles for giving, consider which ones are easy for you to embrace and which ones are difficult for you to embrace.

**Weekend:** Review your insights from the previous days. Re-read 1 John 3:16-19 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. Then look ahead at Acts 2:46-47.