

# A Self-Examination

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In our society acts of kindness, giving gifts to the needy, and other charitable activities are generally approved by most everyone. Numerous times we have seen prominent people on TV serving food at a homeless shelter, helping construct a house in a blighted neighborhood, or possibly comforting victims of a disaster. Recipients and observers alike publicly praise doers of good deeds. But how does God judge the good deeds performed by His people, Christians?

Obviously the Lord expects His disciples to show kindness and be doers of good works. Actually, the Lord expects us “to abound in good works” (I Cor. 15:58) and moreover, be “zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). But are good works all God expects from us? Is it just the results that count with our Lord?

The short answer is no. God also looks at the motive and purpose of doers of good deeds, i.e., God is first interested in the “heart” of the doer. Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). The verse “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit ...” (Phil. 2:3), lets us know the Lord does not praise charitable acts done purely for show and praise by the public. Jesus even condemned praying when it is done for the wrong reasons (Matt. 6:5).

Both charitable deeds and praying are good and right within themselves and should be an integral part of the Christian’s life. The public would likely praise Ananias and Sapphira for selling their possessions and giving part of the proceeds to the needy, but they did not give with the right motive and purpose. Benevolent and charitable deeds performed simply as “photo opportunities” do not meet God’s standard.

We see that it is not enough to just do the right thing, but we must do right things for the right reasons. But, is there still more that God requires of us? Again, the short answer is yes. We must have the right attitude also. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). We are admonished to “do all things without murmuring and disputing” (Phil. 2:14). Gifts, given begrudgingly, do not meet God’s criteria.

In summary, we must do the right thing, for the right reason, and with the proper attitude if our acts of kindness and charitable gifts are to be pleasing to God. The Christians at Macedonia, when they sent gifts to their brethren in Jerusalem, were excellent examples of Christians doing the right thing, for the right reason, and with the right attitude (2 Cor. 8:2-5).

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For the elders