How Should I Help the Poor and Needy?

“But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:17-18)”

Sarah has been reflecting on this scripture for several weeks. She is surely in the “has” category in the 1st John scripture. Her frustration has been how to implement the love of God through deeds in her local community. What concerns her most is that she only has limited time given her family commitments to follow this Biblical charge that seems so clear – she really needs to put her faith in action.

There definitely are opportunities. Sarah along with her husband and three young children live in the inner city of a large metropolitan location. She has recently given birth to her youngest. Her main avenues for helping those in need have come through their church which is located in this inner city known for its transformation over the past decade as middle income families have moved away. Those left are mainly low income.

She relates to her friend and fellow believer Abby over coffee, “I am frustrated in that I know that evidence of my faith should include helping those in need. But it’s not that easy. Each setting is so different.”

Abby responds, “How can you be frustrated? I have never known someone so oriented toward helping others as you are. If that isn’t evidence of commitment, I don’t know what is.”

Sarah, “I appreciate that but there is still my problem – how to express my faith in different Christian outreach settings knowing that my family requires a lot of my time these days.”

She continues, “Let me describe two situations that are distinctly different and yet, I feel, are in need and require good works as laid out in the Bible. The first is an extended Hmong family. As you know, many Hmong families migrated from rural Laos following the many forms of attack and imprisonment that began after the end of the Viet Nam conflict in the 1970’s because of their helping the US forces. Recent Hmong immigrants to this country have largely settled in those communities throughout the US with a significant Hmong population. These communities are well established by now and integrated into their respective cities. However, the Hmong family I know has come to our city for job-related reasons. While many of the Hmong immigrants have been exposed to Christianity, this family has not. Although I have just met them, the husband and wife are very gracious and open for us to meet with them. I could see us not only helping them get on their feet financially but they also seem to be open to hearing the
Word. Living in the housing project has been difficult for them. In a nutshell, it is obvious they are being discriminated against in the project for being culturally different and focused on getting off of the county welfare program.”

“The other family just moved to the area from another large city. The family unit consists of the grandmother, mother and three children. I got first introduced to them through the gifting project at church. We deliver gifts to needy children. When I delivered the gifts, both the ladies were very appreciative and open for possibly attending church. However, the day I came to pick them up for a Sunday service, no one answered the door even though I could hear people inside the apartment. A few weeks later, I suggested that the young boy in the family might like to be involved in the church flag football program. Again, the mother was excited and eagerly accepted the invitation. However, during the fall season, she only attended a few games and largely ignored me when she did attend. I continued to attend the games out of a commitment to the young boy even though he hardly recognized who I was. Finally, despite our invitations, they have never attended a church service.”

“I know that others could help out but I feel an obligation to both families given my outreach up to this point. However, this witnessing will involve very different settings. Both are similar in that they are poor financially and needy in terms of meeting the Lord. They are very different in their receptivity to my efforts. Again, I don’t have unlimited time given my family commitments.”

Abby thinks for a minute and then responds, “There are some scriptural references like that of 1st John you referred to. However, beyond these, there are likely other Biblical references that may complement these obvious ones. As I see it, you have to ration your time given your family needs. I think it is also important that we take into account the significant differences in the two families. Let’s both take a few days to examine the Bible to see what scriptural insight we can develop. How about a breakfast meeting Wednesday morning?”

**ASSIGNMENT**

Provide a scriptural reference for how Sarah should approach these two families in need.
My Scriptural Research:

Group Scriptural Research:

Decisions / Recommendations:

Primary Scriptural References: