

'Tis the Season

When we give, we are fulfilling a year-round mandate to bless others.

To say that Christmas is the season for giving is almost cliché. Every store you go into from September on makes that clear through notices on marquees, special sales on advertised items and extended hours of operation. Retail establishments large and small do everything they can to encourage shoppers to spend their hard-earned money on gifts for those they love.

Charitable organizations, too, make their appeals—not through ads in the paper but through fliers left on car windows, appearances at local stores and special fund-raising events. The heads of these organizations are well aware that at Christmastime people are inclined to be more generous.

And that's a scriptural thing. The Bible tells us to "'give to him who asks'" (Matt. 5:42, NKJV). When we respond, we are fulfilling not simply a seasonal but a year-round mandate to bless others.

Often, however, we are bombarded with so many pleas for support during the holidays that we become immune to the cries of the poor and needy for our help. Or perhaps we find it easier to ignore them than to sort through all the requests and determine which ones are most worthy of our contributions.

That's why Charisma, for the last three years, has handpicked ministries from around the country to bring to your attention. We highlight people we call "unsung heroes"—little-known Christian men and women with no desire for recognition who

have selflessly devoted their lives to helping others—so that you will have the information you need to give wisely. Instead of responding under pressure—or not responding at all—you can give with confidence that every penny donated will go directly to the ministry you specify and will be used to support its work.

This year we tell you about Evan and April Prosser, who turned a bus into a church to reach the homeless; Robert and Rene Briceland, who provide food for families on a Navajo reservation; Aida Bowers, who founded a home to rehabilitate prostitutes; and several others. The ministries all are unique, and all are having a significant impact on the communities in which they are located. And because they are run by committed people who aren't in it for themselves, we believe they deserve our aid.

Won't you join me in supporting these ministries? Simply send your donation to our nonprofit partner, Christian Life Missions, at P.O. Box 952248, Lake Mary, FL 32795-2248 and indicate which ministry you would like the funds to be distributed to. Or, if you choose not to specify, we will divide your gift evenly among the ministries featured in this issue.

Remember: Giving is not an option for the sincere believer. Jesus not only commanded that we do it but He also provided the ultimate example by giving up His life for us. Now His Spirit, living within us, moves us to follow that example.

The Scriptures also promise great rewards for those who give. Proverbs tells us that “he who gives to the poor will not lack, but he who hides his eyes will have many curses” (Prov. 28:27). And the gospel of Luke records Jesus' words to His

disciples about giving: “‘Give, and it will be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you'” (Luke 6:38).

Perhaps as important as Jesus' encouragement to give is the mission God has assigned to us of fighting evil, freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, housing the poor and clothing the naked (see Is. 58:6-9). We may have the opportunity to fulfill this mission in a literal way on occasion, but how many of us can do these things daily? Yet we can support those who do through our generous gifts to their ministries.

Over the years Charisma readers have given several million dollars through Christian Life Missions, which we used to send Bibles to China, house orphans in Haiti and feed famine victims in Africa. Let's continue this tradition by giving largely from our hearts this Christmas. Think of the hundreds of thousands of dollars that would be raised if every reader gave only \$1.

Cliché or not, it truly is the season to give. Please send in your gift today.

Stephen Strang is the founder and publisher of Charisma.