



It's time to share



A theme reflection and scriptural exegesis for the 2023 One Great Hour of Sharing

“So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all.”
~Galatians 6:9-10, *The Message*

“Give a person a fish and you feed them for one day. Teach a person to fish and you feed them forever.” *
The meaning of this phrase seems clear—take care of a need now or empower others to do for themselves.

While the Apostle Paul does not talk about fishing or hunger or food insecurity in his letter to the Galatians, he does talk about how Christians are to live: generously helping and caring for others.

In Paul's day, more than half of the population lived at or below subsistence level, barely able to make ends meet. Many died prematurely due to malnutrition and ailments that resulted from lack of healthy and plentiful food. Most people—adults and children—experienced food insecurity.

Those who had money and power contributed to building roads and water systems, and hosted lavish banquets for their colleagues. Their public displays of generosity were often self-serving, though: the bigger and more public their acts of giving, the more they were esteemed in the eyes of those they wanted to impress. Acts of charity, on any scale to make a difference for those in need, were few and far between. Government safety nets were non-existent.

Paul understands that God raises the bar on community life—the care of the poor and vulnerable; the use of resources to benefit those who really need help; loving one's neighbor; caring for the environment; and advocating social justice so all can live and thrive. For Paul, communities grounded in Jesus' sacrificial life and death are to practice radical hospitality and generosity: making a place for all and using financial resources to help those who really need help. Community life means meeting immediate needs (giving fish) and working for long-term progress (teaching to fish). Food security requires both.

Paul also understands that radical hospitality and generosity are tiring. The needs of people keep growing. The call to help and to share is insistent, urgent, unending, exhausting. Paul reminds the Galatians that their communities are different; they are shaped and sustained by God's Spirit. Their loving acts are responses to God's own loving acts towards each of them. God keeps on giving, and so should they.

Paul compares sacrificial, communal love to harvesting. So much is needed for a bountiful harvest, and anything can disrupt its outcome. Embedded in harvesting is fatigue, uncertainty, and anxiety—yet, the planting, pruning, and tending are done as one waits, in hope, for the outcome.

** A version of this phrase appeared 138 years ago in Anne Isabella Thackeray Ritchie's novel, Mrs. Dymond, believed to be the first instance of its use.*

Paul encourages the Galatians, and us, to look at the bigger picture. Guided and strengthened by God's Spirit, we are called to work, plant, grow, and produce until the final harvest day—the harvest that marks the fulfillment of God's Reign, already started and yet to be completed in God's own time.

Perhaps we grow weary because we do not know if our efforts truly make a difference. Will our dollars improve the devastating effects of climate change? Will our contributions feed every hungry person in the world? Do our ministries adequately address the spiritual needs of our community? How can we know if our gifts are worth it?

The One Great Hour of Sharing of the Church of the Brethren answers these questions. Whether a person has hunger in their body or soul, the work we do together as the body of Christ can make a difference. Your gifts help the Global Food Initiative and Brethren Disaster Ministries to respond to immediate and long-term hunger issues, no matter the cause, both locally and globally. With the help of your partnership, Discipleship Ministries and Global Mission offer hope in places near and far.

We cannot physically be everywhere or see all the results with our own eyes, but through your generous offerings and special gifts, you help promote the loving community that Paul advocates. Through One Great Hour of Sharing YOU are reaching into the world; working in partnership with people we will never meet, yet with whom we are connected. Your contributions are transforming lives for generations to come and are part of the harvest into which Paul invites us. Your gifts bring the Reign/Kindom of God closer to us all.

We can make a difference. We do make a difference. Your generosity makes all the difference in the world.

There is power in doing good and changing the lives of others. We cannot grow weary or quit—lives are at stake. God's Spirit energizes and re-energizes us when we get tired. God helps us to help others.

The need has never been greater. Let us continue this good work. Let us stay energized. Let us give generously. The opportunity is now. It's time to share.

Give an offering to One Great Hour of Sharing today at www.brethren.org/giveoffering.