

“BETTER CALL A GAS STATION”

By Keith Greer

Being a gospel preacher often received calls at the office, or someone stops by, looking for some financial help from the church for some problem they are having. Most of the time these are folks just looking for money to purchase things for themselves because they are too lazy to work. Sometimes they want the money for drugs or alcohol. Yet, are they ALWAYS just parasites looking for a free hand out? Let me tell you a story...

Many years ago when I was working for the church in Las Vegas, a family from Montana was traveling through our fair city. The young lady's husband was in the military, stationed in Saudi Arabia, and she was accompanied by her two small children and her grandfather. About 4:30 Sunday afternoon, while I was preparing for evening services and the phone rang. This sister's car went dead, and not knowing anyone in Las Vegas, but being a member of the church, she called the building.

After she explained her situation and her location, I advised her to call one of the congregations that was very close to where she had broken down, and I gave her the preacher's phone number. In about 15 minutes, the phone rang again, and it was the young woman crying. When she finally calmed herself, she started to explain. The preacher was indeed home, and she had talked with him, but after she had explained her situation, he had told her, "Better call a gas station and tell them the problem. I cannot be bothered." Then he hung up!

Unbelievable, you might say. Yet, true. This young lady had asked for no money. She had only asked for some information and help to get to an auto repair shop. My question is a simple one. Where was brotherly kindness shown to this woman?

While living in Las Vegas, we were subject to many who lie and are just looking for a handout. Yet, is it right to assume that every call is just someone trying to take advantage of us? Can we just turn a "deaf ear" to all requests, because of the times we have been "taken"?

Fortunately, this family was helped, fed and provided a place to sleep overnight until their car was ready the next day, but what conclusions could this sister in Christ have drawn about the brethren here if no one had helped her? Two weeks later I received a card from her, also from her husband overseas, and the church where they attended, thanking us for showing Christian compassion.

We enjoy many blessings as Christians because of what Christ has done for us. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." (1 Peter 1:22) This LOVE is not just a feeling we carry in our hearts, but will be manifest by our actions. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3: 17)

Are we just supposed to have love for those in the local church without regard to other members of God's family? "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Hebrews 13:2) "... Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (Matthew 25:45)

On many occasions I have personally helped folks who later turned out to be panhandlers just looking for a handout. Yet, I would rather be "taken" instead of one time turning down a really needy family in a terrible situation because I stereotyped every case as being nothing more than someone looking for a free lunch! Yes, we should ask questions and then we will have to make a personal judgment concerning that situation whether or not we should help. Please think about it the next time you "can't be bothered" with one needing some temporary help! ****