



The Christian origins of our Kiwi Cultural views on

CHARITY

What made Kiwi's so generous?

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever really needed something you didn't have, and no one helped you? What happened? How did you feel?
- What areas of need in the world concern you the most? (Note - it is surely God who gives people different areas of concern – so there are no wrong answers)

BIBLICAL BASIS QUESTIONS:

- What instructions were God's people given in regard to the poor? See Exodus 22: 21 -22; Isaiah 1:17; Psalm 22: 24 – 31; Hebrews 13:16.
- Does "Biblical charity" mean a 'hand out'? See Ruth 2:15 – 17; 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
- We live in a reasonably wealthy nation. Should we expect charity from our Government and society? Should there be some sort of 'qualification' before help is offered? Discuss ideas. Note Paul's attitude in 2 Thessalonians 3:9.

HISTORY REVISION FROM THE 'HOPE FOR ALL – AT PEACE TOGETHER' BOOKLET

The below questions can be answered from the concise historical summaries found in *Hope for all - At Peace Together*.

General revision:

- What is the name of the Maori chief who invited missionaries to bring their message of hope to his people? Who did he invite? What was the year? On what day was the first Christian message preached on New Zealand soil? (Note: There had been sermons on ships prior – but never invited by Maori, and on NZ soil).
- What is the significance of this above history? (Christianity wasn't an imposition of colonisation. It was invited by Maori, eventually embraced by Maori, and then spread throughout New Zealand by Maori to Maori. By the 1860s more than half of all Maori were in a Sunday Church service – which was usually in Te Reo Maori).

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Revision regarding charity:

- How did Jesus teach that true love for God should express itself?
- What effect did this have in the early church, and how was this different to wider society?
- What percentage of donations to churches during the middle ages did local churches devote to helping the sick and poor? (The abuse of Church power in these periods of time led to terrible things like the Crusades and Inquisitions. Why didn't the general populous abandon Christianity when observing these evil abuses of Church power?)
- What nations are listed as the most generous – and what is their religious background? Do you know any of the many differences between the Christian view of charity and that of other religions? (See footnote)
- How did a Victoria University study find the “very religious” in our nation to be different from the general population? (Note from the footnotes in the booklet that 95% of those classifying themselves as ‘very religious’ were Christians)

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

- Have you started a habit of giving to God's work with income you earn? If we don't start doing this when young, what is the danger?
- Read Matthew 25:31-46
 - Imagine you were given \$1m. How much would you keep for yourself, and how much would you give away to charity? If you were financially fine beforehand, why not give all?
 - What does this question dig at? (Charity is a measure of our love. The heart of the matter is a matter of the heart!)
- Read Matthew 19:29
 - Final point: Loving others in the way Jesus called us to really does cost us – but we must do it anyway because (1) it is the right thing to do and, (2) God sees all we do and has promised to reward!

Footnote:

The difference between Christian concepts of charity and those of other religions is significant – although rarely talked about. To give some quick examples, Buddhist Monks in Cambodia today are known to control the water supply of their villages, and to charge for it as a way to make money. The poor cannot afford the water. Who do you think digs them wells? (This is the sort of thing Christian mission has done, or caused to happen, the world-over. While some Monks might be good as compared to Christian values, the point is that other religions do not offer this same high moral standard as moral LAW – which means this standard doesn't even have to be believed). In other places 'giving alms (charity) is part of the Eastern religious traditions, however money and food is given to Monks because this results in a blessing upon the giver - while the hungry beggar sitting next might remain unfed. In this instance their charity is about a spiritual good work for blessing – not care for the poor. Consider Hindu India, while giving food to the poor is a good work that some embrace, while helping to educate a poor person, or giving them a job, is not good because it changes their status and condition within the Hindu caste system. Their worldview is that this poor person suffers because their Karma (from previous lives) says they must. To improve their circumstances there interrupts their Karma, which disadvantages them in the next life. So helping to change a persons' overall situation is therefore not a good thing to do. Muslims are required to give 2.5% to charity, which is great, as it is more than most religions. It would, however, be very rare that this was given to help enemies, as one example. In contrast Christians begin at 10%, and the Christian is morally obliged by God to not only help their own needed – but any needed among their enemies – and also to potentially lay their lives down for the good of their enemies. So, while it is true that all cultures have a concept of charity at some level (which many will argue), the Christian concepts we have from Jesus are radically different. The story is told of one historian who searched for evidence of a charitable organisation in the ancient world, and could not find a single example. In contrast, NZ has over 25,000 charities today. Why is this? It is because of our Christian past! Many Kiwi values are specifically Christian values., However, many are unaware of this.

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