

## Going Beyond

*“You have heard it said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:43-48*

The issue in this passage of scripture has to do with followers of Jesus going beyond customary boundaries of concern for others. *So you love those who love you. Don't others do the same? What more are you doing? Love those who don't love you.* I thought about this as I watched on TV as the flotillas rescued persons stranded by the floodwaters in Houston. And I agree with those who said it was humanity at its best.

And not just those motoring about in boats. How about those who opened shelters and distributed food and water and bused evacuees to other shelters because that one was filled up? Or those who welcomed evacuees into homes that hadn't been flooded? All of it, humanity at its best. At that point in time, it couldn't have been done much better.

But what now? Disaster relief isn't entirely humanity at its best. For example, in Honduras following Hurricane Mitch, 1998, a plane carrying needed food and water couldn't land because large bundles of donated, used clothing were sitting on the runway, including bundles of winter coats with a high heel shoe on top. The clothing wasn't needed. It had to be thrown away. Also, there are charities that show up, evidently, just to be seen on TV. As soon as they make the news, they disappear.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), to whom Sandia is sending monetary donations for Harvey and Irma and wildfire relief in the West, says that an incredible percentage of what is donated for disaster relief does have to be thrown away. Also, that there are alleged charitable organizations that are in it more for publicity than to help.

Not the case with PDA's efforts. For example, Hurricane Andrew struck Florida back in 1992. Four years after that, 1996, I was at a conference where a pastor from Homestead, which was really walloped, explained how PDA does its work. It determines the best use of its funds and donations, often in collaboration with pastors and members of local churches. And then it may take on tasks that other charities won't or overlook.

Like what? At that point in time, four years after Andrew hit, new homes were being completed for those who had lost theirs. But whatever agency built them forgot the appliances – refrigerators, stoves, washing machines, dryers. Few of the survivors moving in had money for appliances. So PDA used funds to help purchase them.

*What more are you doing?* PDA will be in the Houston area and in Florida and many other places for many years, long after other charities have gone. PDA is always stretched thin – lots of disasters - but it is committed to helping in ways that truly matter. – DJ