



Practicing the principle Of 'the greater need'

What happens when a person or church—or a national ministry—receives a gift someone else needs more than they do?

Last year leaders at the Wycliffe Bible Translators' (WBT) office in Huntington Beach, California, began praying for more living quarters for their personnel. Rent in Southern California is out of sight. The need for homes for office workers and retired and furloughing missionaries was desperate.

Early last year the U.S. director for WBT, Bernie May, received a call. A 59-unit apartment complex, just a few blocks from the office, was for sale. May checked it out. It was perfect for their needs. The units were all two-bedroom and rented (by California standards) at reasonable rates.

The complex had belonged to an elderly Christian woman who had given it to the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The board of trustees at CBN which produces the "700 Club" had received the gift with the understanding they would sell it and use the money to help finance their new CBN University and expand their Christian TV ministry overseas into Lebanon and Israel.

The property was valued at \$2.2 million, and a California broker had already offered them that much in cash. However, as the trustees had prayed over the offer, they felt a check. So far they had not accepted the offer even though they badly needed the money.

When the trustees learned of Wycliffe's interest, they instructed their California agent to work out the contract. They felt good about selling the property to another ministry.

There was only one catch. Wycliffe did not have \$2.2 million. Nor did they have the means of raising it.

Even though WBT is the largest missionary organization in the world, each missionary, translator, pilot, administrator, and secretary is independently supported. They have no fund-raising techniques, and there is no "slush fund" to cover extra purchases—especially those which cost \$2.2 million.

A friend of Wycliffe, who is also a friend of CBN, got involved. He contacted the

trustees at CBN, explaining the critical need at Wycliffe and encouraging them to do what they could to help.

The Wycliffe people waited—and prayed. In June of last year Bernie May left on a round-the-world trip to visit a number of mission stations manned by Wycliffe personnel. Just before he left, he made a final call to the Virginia Beach offices of CBN.

"We want and need the apartments," he told them. "But it looks like you'll just have to go ahead and sell them to the broker. We simply don't have the money."

May left on his trip, resigning the matter into the hands of the Lord. He was ad-

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hering to an old Wycliffe adage: "We do our best and leave the rest in the hands of God."

Six weeks later, when May returned to the States, there was a call waiting for him from one of the vice presidents of CBN.

"The Lord would not let us accept the deal from the California broker. As our president, Pat Robertson, prayed, he felt we should give the property to Wycliffe. The board agrees. If you are willing to pick up the mortgage payments, the apartments are yours—as a gift."

The rental money from the apartments easily covers the mortgage payments. As a result the housing crisis at Wycliffe has been averted.

When Bernie May shared this story with me, he made several points which have universal application.

First, May pointed out, although there are many Spirit-baptized persons among

Wycliffe's members, WBT is not recognized as a "charismatic" ministry. In fact, the majority of their folks come from evangelical churches, some of whom are actively anti-charismatic.

This did not stand in the way of CBN's gift, however. The fact WBT is pioneering in the area of Bible translation, and doing an excellent job getting the Word of God to the Bibleless tribes of the world, was all that was taken into account. CBN's generosity, therefore, becomes an example of unity which transcends doctrinal differences.

Second, CBN asked nothing in return. There were no strings attached to the gift. They expected no publicity nor any reciprocal action on the part of Wycliffe. They gave gladly with no expectation of receiving anything back.

Third, they gave out of their need. Just a week before the gift was authorized, CBN was forced to cancel its nationwide early morning television program "USam" due to lack of funds.

That \$2.2 million was badly needed for their own expansion program—but Wycliffe's need was even greater and more urgent. It was a perfect example of the principle of giving to the "greater need" and trusting God to make up the difference.

In summing up the matter May told me: "I learned a long time ago that when things start going badly around the May household—when money is short and our needs are great—I should look around for something valuable to give away.

"God always blesses those who give. CBN gave to us out of their need. In so doing they have strengthened the faith of our more than 4,000 missionaries who are ministering all over the world. CBN confirmed that our security does not lie in real estate, nor in bank accounts. Our source is God."

The next time you receive a gift, look around before you deposit it in the bank—or sell it for a profit. It may be, as it was in the case of CBN, that you received the gift in order to pass it on to someone more needy.

If so, I hope you will obey. One of life's greatest blessings is to be the answer to someone else's prayer. ⇨