

GROWING Together

12th Series

ANOTHER DEFICIT (IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS!)

Everywhere we turn, people are talking about deficits. Our governments don't have enough money. Our schools and hospitals don't have enough money. Our churches lack for funds to do the basics.

After money, the second most common deficit is time. Everyone is busier than they've ever been before. Neighbours have no time to visit. Families have no time for a common meal. Communities have no time to volunteer, and citizens have no time to participate in the political process. Like rats in a cage, we're all running faster and faster yet feeling less satisfied, less fulfilled.

We feel possessed by these deficits of money and time because we have lost sight of our priorities. The confusion arises from a third deficit: **in Christian Ethics.** Ethics are guidelines that help us choose between conflicting priorities. Priorities are the values we put into practice today which shape the persons we become tomorrow. Christian ethics affirm every person's worth as made in the image of God. They differ from market ethics which value the rich over the poor, the strong over the weak.

The Bible is full of stories about people who have lost their way. In each case they find God when they recall what their priorities ought to be. Moses receives ten commandments when people are lost on their way to the promised land. When the rich become richer and the poor, poorer, the author of Leviticus calls for all debts to be forgiven in a year of jubilee. When it happens again, Amos calls for justice to roll like a river. When it happens yet again, Isaiah calls for a new heaven and a new earth.

When Jesus appears in a synagogue to announce the priorities of his mission, he quotes Isaiah's priority of good news to the poor. When he imagines the end of time, Matthew recalls Jesus saying we will be judged by the priority we give to the hungry and lonely. Even Paul reminds us we are all parts of a single body; if one member suffers, we all suffer.

Canadian population either on unemployment insurance or welfare, we have a crisis of work and of money. Our crisis is also moral. Our world is being reorganized and our priorities are revealed by the actual changes being made. Chief executive officers working for Canadian Pacific, Nova Corp. and the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan are routinely paid salaries over \$1 million each while unemployment insurance payments are systematically reduced. Is this the new heaven and earth yearned for by Isaiah? Is the option for the poor called for by Jesus also the priority being implemented by our hospitals and schools?

Our faith is being sold out to the economy. The deficit in Christian ethics allows the ethic of the marketplace to reign unchallenged. Society is rejecting Jesus' teaching that all wealth comes from God. Instead, we think wealth comes only from the market, that we all deserve whatever we can get. Our option for the rich and strong means one Canadian executive can earn over \$40 million year after year and no one thinks it immoral. The situation is nobody's fault but ours. We must ensure that when one member of the body is hurting, all are involved in the healing.

Bible and Ethics Quiz

Draw a line connecting the ethical value with the Bible verse where it is found. Clues are in the text.

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| 1 Matthew 25:31-46 | a "Let justice roll like a river..." |
| 2 Exodus 20: 1-17 | b "If one member suffers, all suffer..." |
| 3 Amos 5:21-24 | c "[I am] anointed to preach good news to the poor" |
| 4 Isaiah 65:17-25 | d "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" |
| 5 Leviticus 25:1-24 | e "As you did it to the least of these...you did it to me" |
| 6 Luke 4:16-21 | f "In the year of jubilee, each shall return to their property" |
| 7 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 | g "You shall not covet your neighbour's house" |

Answers: 1e) 2g) 3a) 4d) 5f) 6c) 7b)

GROWING TOGETHER is a series of five monthly Sunday bulletin inserts for the ecumenical education of Christ's faithful.



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