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# WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

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9:30 am Bible Class—all ages  
10:30 am Sunday Worship  
5:00 pm Proverbs study (online)  
7:00 pm Wednesday Bible Class

Phone Number: (623) 695-5623  
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**December 5, 2021**

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## No Christian Left Behind

People who create policy for teachers and schools speak often about students falling through the cracks as they fail in their studies. Often, there is an underlying reason that contributes to this failure. Sometimes a rough home environment or poverty is to blame. Sometimes a student is overlooked or even mistreated because he or she is in a racial, social, or economic minority when compared to his or her peers. Sometimes a student struggles with mental health or suffers from a learning disability. Whatever might contribute to it, failure is not acceptable to the policy makers. By way of law and policy, they used to demand from superintendents, principals, and teachers, “No Child Left Behind”; now they proclaim, “Every Student Succeeds.”

It’s impossible for Christians at any congregation to make sure that every other Christian succeeds; as Paul said, “each one shall bear his own load” (Galatians 6:5). However, it’s also impossible for Christians at any congregation to succeed if any Christian among them is left behind; Paul also said, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). No one is exempt from “one another” in a congregational setting. We simply can’t fulfill Christ’s law while overlooking the needs of a brother or sister in Christ.

The church at Jerusalem realized quickly that while “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6), it is hard to be godly or content when you don’t have any food. So, in addition to responding to exceptional needs in benevolence (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35), they enacted a “daily distribution” of food to their neediest members, widows (Acts 6:1). Normally, this would be a good thing; caring for widows is part of the practice of pure religion (James 1:27). However, this good thing became a bad thing when Hellenistic widows were left behind even as Hebrew widows were served (Acts 6:1).

Luke doesn’t record why the Hellenistic widows were ignored. Had old prejudices been brought into the church? Were Hebrew Christians only serving those whom they felt naturally inclined to serve? Whatever the case, when the apostles found out, the response was decisive. The problem had to be solved, and the Hellenistic widows had to be served (Acts 6:2-4). In effect, they demanded, “No Christian Left Behind.”

While we can respectfully disagree with the policy makers in our government, there is no room for disagreement with the apostles. Their teachings are foundational both to the church and to our faith (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19-22). As they are not here to supervise us directly like they did the early church at Jerusalem, we must take it upon ourselves to ask the question, “Is any Christian slipping through the cracks at my congregation?” Are Christians in rough situations, in poverty, or who hold minority status among us being neglected? Is anyone suffering from anything that is disabling their progress in Christ?

When no Christian is left behind, the church succeeds. When the church at Jerusalem made sure that everyone in the church was being cared for, “the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem” (Acts 6:7a). Even Jewish priests, entrenched as they were in the Jewish faith, turned to Christianity as they saw the beautiful way Christians loved one another (Acts 6:7b). Amazing things happen whenever God’s people ensure that no Christian is left behind!