

APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

Reverend Leo Trevino

“Life-giver at Death’s Doorstep”

The miracle of organ transplantation has made possible what was only a few decades ago unimaginable to all but the medical field’s optimistic researchers. The chronically ill, whose lives depend on organ procurement, now have a real chance at life. Through my work in an organ procurement organization in New York, I was lucky enough to be one of those directly involved in promoting and aiding the growth of transplantation.

As anyone - patients, surgeons, donor family members, volunteers, procurement agency workers – can tell you, the quest to obtain organs and tissues is endless. Perhaps the most difficult, yet rewarding, moments during the organ and tissue donation process involves obtaining consent from grieving families for donation of their loved one’s organs. As an anatomical Gift Counselor for over eight years, I was involved in over 200 requests. These requests always came at a time of tragedy and emotional turmoil for family members, and it was difficult to convey to them the urgency and extremity of the need for organ and tissue donors which their recently deceased relatives could help meet. A new kidney, lung, heart, pancreas, skin graft, or a new cornea can mean not just a return to a functioning life, but an extension on a life that is all too often near it’s end.

Having asked the question literally hundreds of times, “Would you consider donating your loved one’s organs and tissues?” I quickly learned donor families were fulfilling a biblical mandate found in St. Matthew 19:19, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” They serve as a living example of the satisfaction that personifies the biblical attributes that make the organ and tissue donor a life-giver at death’s doorstep: self-sacrifice, good stewardship, and unselfishness.

Organ and tissue donation and transplantation is an illustration of the biblical principle of self-sacrifice. Jesus said, “Greater love has no man than this, that one lay down his life for his friends, even if it means giving of his own life.

In this country, we have national holidays to honor those who gave their lives for freedom. We make heroes of those who risk their own well being for the sad of others. Donating organs and tissues is also a heroic act. Donating organs is good stewardship.

Scriptures teach that we are to do good to all persons, especially those who are believers. (Galatians 6:10) Christians are encouraged to practice good stewardship in every area of life. We encourage planned giving whereby believers leave some of their estate to particular ministries following their death. Shouldn’t we be urged to make a gift of our organs also?

A Presbyterian pastor wrote: “As Presbyterians we believe in the faithful use of everything God gives us. We call it “stewardship.” Because of this we believe in making available our physical organs when we no longer have need for this body. The final and ultimate stewardship we can practice in this life is the donating of any part of our body which God can use to sustain productive life and better health of another person.”

It is a Christian's obligation to help people when it is within his or her own power to do so. St. Paul teaches that we do not live nor die for ourselves. (Romans 14:7) As the Lord Jesus demonstrated with His own death on the cross, we live for others.

The Gift of Life reaffirms what we in the transplantation field believe is truly the "opportunity of a lifetime" – organ and tissue donation. This self-sacrificial, good stewardship, and unselfish giving is clearly among the most admirable of Christian deeds.