

Opioid Payments Fail Those Harmed

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News is full of stories about hundreds of millions of dollars of legal settlements between state and local governments against drug manufacturing companies. The allegation has been that these drug companies knowingly failed to disclose the full addictive nature of the pain medicine they sold.

A major concern I have with these payments for alleged drug addiction actions by manufacturers is that the money does not go to those who were harmed. The payments go to government units which are free to use these funds anyway they wish.

The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "A thief who is caught must pay in full for everything he stole. If he cannot pay, he must be sold as a slave to pay for his theft." (Exodus 22:3 NLT) When the Bible states restitution requirements, the restitution goes to those who were harmed. This makes sense. If somebody robs my house of a thousand dollars of merchandise, is arrested, and fined \$1,000; the money goes to the county and I get nothing, even though I am the one who had property stolen.

We witnessed large settlements during the banking mortgage crisis where financial institutions were fined billions of dollars. At the time the money flowed, the various government level coffers did not go to those people whose homes were improperly foreclosed or who were improperly advised as to the terms of the mortgage they agreed to. The money didn't go to anyone harmed by what the courts determined was reckless lending.

Punitive judgments benefit society. It discourages similar behavior in the future. However, punishment is only one side of the equation. The Bible gives us another: provide restitution to those that who were harmed.