

# **Philanthropy 101: “Exploring Generosity” presentation**

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## **Introduction**

### The Lottery Question

What would you do if you and your family won the lottery and suddenly had more money than you can imagine? Go ahead. Close your eyes and consider. What comes to mind first?

What would you do about school? Would you stay where you are, or go somewhere else? Would this change your plans about college? Maybe you would travel and explore – where and how? Would your family buy a new house? A new car? Why stop there? How about a boat? A plane? Would you take a dream vacation? More than one? Get new clothes? Eat amazing meals all the time? After a few minutes, the game wears thin. Somewhere inside you feel that the exercise is enjoyable but empty.

OK, this approach does seem selfish. But the money still would be worth having, right? After all, you can help people too – family, friends, needy folks in your community. You’d share. You’re a good person, after all. But how would you start? And where would you end?

Of course, there is much more to life than money. We all have abilities and attributes that can be useful to ourselves and to others. What are we supposed to do with them in order to live well?

Let’s take a step farther back. If you had no limits, what would you change about your life? What would you do? Where would you be? Who would be the focus of your time, talent, and treasure?

These questions are at the heart of this presentation. Regardless of our circumstances, we all have many opportunities to make our lives and the world around us better. How do we use our capabilities well? Generosity is at the heart of the answer.

## **Science and Psychology**

### Human Nature and Generosity

Science and psychology are unlocking more and more secrets about how our minds and bodies work than ever before. In doing so, they are discovering that altruism (caring about and serving others with no immediate gain for the giver) is wired into who we are. Here is just one example:

“Imagine you're dining at a restaurant in a city you're visiting for the first — and, most likely the last — time. Chances are slim to none that you'll ever see your server again, so if you wanted to shave a few dollars off your tab by not leaving a tip, you could do so. And yet, if you're like most people, you will leave the tip anyway, and not give it another thought.

“These commonplace acts of generosity — where no future return is likely — have long posed a scientific puzzle to evolutionary biologists and economists. In acting generously, the donor incurs a cost to benefit someone else. But choosing to incur a cost with no prospect of a compensating benefit is seen as maladaptive by biologists and irrational by economists. If traditional theories in these fields are true, such behaviors should have been weeded out long ago by evolution or by self-interest. According to these theories, human nature is fundamentally self-serving, with any ‘excess’ generosity the result of social pressure or cultural conformity.

“Recently, however, a team of scientists at UC Santa Barbara conducted a series of computer simulations designed to test whether it was really true that evolution would select against generosity in situations where there is no future payoff. Their work surprisingly shows that generosity — acting to help others in the absence of foreseeable gains — emerges naturally from the evolution of cooperation. This means that human generosity is likely to rest on more than social pressure, and is instead built in to human nature.”<sup>1</sup>

## History

### Generosity Is Universal

There are examples of generosity around the world and through all of human history. We are focusing particularly on generosity in the Western tradition.

### Generosity and Early Christianity

The key to the spread of early Christianity was the radical generosity of the Christians.

Roman Emperor Julian : “These impious Galileans not only feed their poor, but ours also; welcoming them into their *agapae* [fellowship], they attract them as children are attracted, with cakes.”<sup>2</sup>

### Charity vs. Philanthropy

Charity: “donations or generous actions to aid the poor, ill, or helpless; benevolent feeling, esp. towards those in need; leniency in judging others”<sup>3</sup>

Philanthropy: “altruistic concern for human beings, esp. as manifested by donations of property, money, or work to needy persons or to institutions advancing human welfare; a philanthropic act or donation; a philanthropic institution”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> News Release, “UCSB Scholars Study the Evolution of Human Generosity,” July 25, 2011, UC Santa Barbara. <http://www.ia.ucsb.edu/pa/display.aspx?pkey=2538>

<sup>2</sup> Schmidt, Charles, *Social Results of Early Christianity*, p. 328

<sup>3</sup> *Webster's College Dictionary*, 1991, Random House, p. 228.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1013.

Charity focuses directly on those in need. Philanthropy is concerned more about problem solving. Both are important. Which is more appealing to you?

## **Philosophy and Theology**

### Aristotle (Greek Philosopher) on Generosity

“Things meant for use can be used well and badly, and wealth is a useful thing. Now, any object is put to the best use by a man who possesses the virtue proper to that object. Accordingly, wealth will be put to best use by him who possesses the excellence proper to material goods, and that is the generous man.”<sup>5</sup>

### Seneca (Roman Philosopher) on Giving

“[The wise man] will give [wealth] either to good men or to those whom it may make into good men. He will give it after having taken the utmost pains to choose those who are fittest to receive it, as becomes one who bears in mind that he ought to give an account of what he spends as well as of what he receives. He will give for good and commendable reasons, for a gift ill bestowed counts as a shameful loss: he will have an easily opened pocket, but not one with a hole in it, so that much may be taken out of it, yet nothing may fall out of it.”<sup>6</sup>

### Adam Smith (British Philosopher) on Benevolence

“How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it.”<sup>7</sup>

### The Seven Virtues

The Seven Virtues provide us with a segue from philosophy to theology. There are four Classical (or Cardinal) Virtues from Plato: wisdom, courage, moderation, justice. There are three Christian (or Theological) Virtues from St. Paul: faith, hope, charity/love.

In Plato’s *Republic*, the Greek philosopher Socrates described the chief attributes of a perfect city and its inhabitants as being, “wise, courageous, moderate, and just.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 13 verses 4-13, St. Paul writes, “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

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<sup>5</sup> Kass, Amy A., editor, *The Perfect Gift*, Indiana University Press, 2002. Chapter 1.2, “Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics,” p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> Seneca, *Minor Dialogs*, “Of a Happy Life,” Book XXIII, tr. Aubrey Stewart, George Bell and Sons, London, 1900.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, Adam *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Gutenberg Publishers, 2011, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 4.427d.

“Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”



*The Seven Virtues*

#### The British Writer C.S. Lewis on Charity

“Divine Gift-love – Love Himself working in a man – is wholly disinterested and desires simply what is best for the beloved. Again, natural Gift-love is always directed to objects which the lover finds in some way intrinsically lovable – objects to which Affection or Eros or a shared point of view attracts him, or, failing that, to the grateful and deserving, or perhaps to those whose helplessness is of a winning and appealing kind. But Divine Gift-love in the man enables him to love what is not naturally lovable; lepers, criminals, enemies, morons, the sulky, the superior and the sneering.”<sup>9</sup>

#### St. Paul on Wealth and Generosity

“Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be

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<sup>9</sup> Lewis, C.S., *The Four Loves*, reprint of first edition, 1960, Harcourt, Brace & Co., p. 128.

content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called....

“As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.” [1 Timothy 6: 6-12; 17-19]

## **Generous Living**

### The “Why” of Being Generous: Purpose

Reflect on your passions and interests and assess your generous abilities and inclinations.

There are many benefits to being “On Purpose:



### The “How” of Being Generous: Three P’s – Proximity, Proportion, and Power

#### **Proximity**

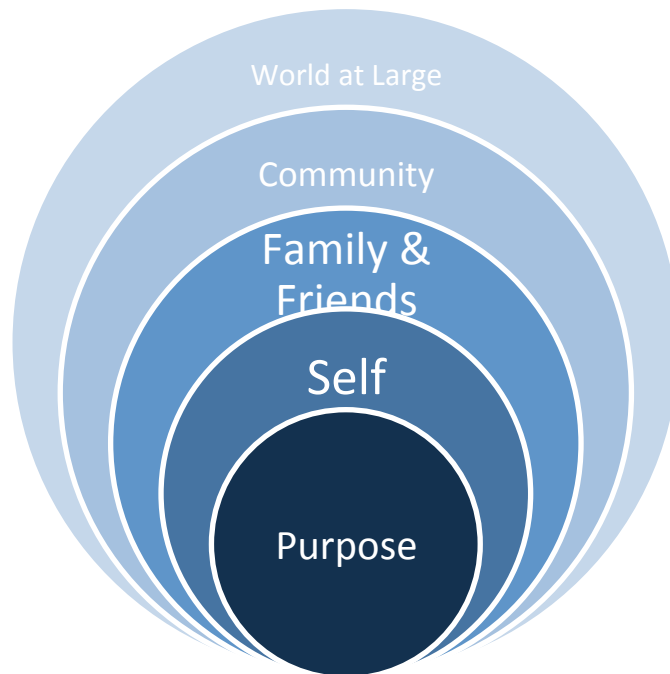
British Minister and Social Activist John Wesley’s three rules about money:<sup>10</sup>

- Earn All You Can
- Save All You Can
- Give All You Can

There is a related model of radiating priorities. The closer the need, the more important it should be:

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<sup>10</sup> Wesley, John, Sermon 50: “The Use of Money,” delivered in 1760.



### *Hierarchy of Priorities*

Wesley was an ordained minister. Bob Dylan was not, but he expressed a similar sentiment in song: “It may be the devil, or it may be the Lord, but you’re going to have to serve somebody.”<sup>11</sup>

The key decision of our lives is what we place at the heart of this circle. Then, in ways that we want to make a difference in our lives and in the world around us, focusing closer to the center is better.

### **Proportion**

In Buddhism, there are three levels of giving presented: miserly, kindly, and kingly.

Miserly: giving leftovers in which you are not interested.

Kindly: sharing what you would want yourself.

Kingly: providing even more and better than you would use yourself.<sup>12</sup>

“[Jesus] looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the [Temple] treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.’ [Luke 21:1-4]

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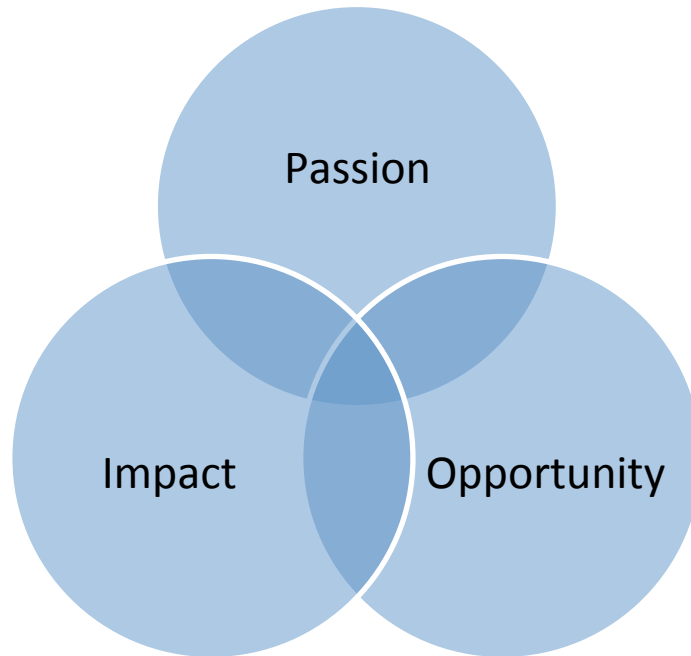
<sup>11</sup> “Gotta Serve Somebody,” from the album, *Slow Train Coming*, Bob Dylan, 1979.

<sup>12</sup> [http://learningtogive.org/faithgroups/voices/generosity\\_in\\_buddhism.asp](http://learningtogive.org/faithgroups/voices/generosity_in_buddhism.asp), and other sources.

“From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.” [Luke 12:48]

## **Power**

Effective giving comes from aligning three forces: passion, impact, and opportunity.



*Alignment for Powerful Giving*

## **Generosity of Spirit**

What is this emotion?



“Jacket Ceremony” at Ron Clark Academy, Atlanta, GA

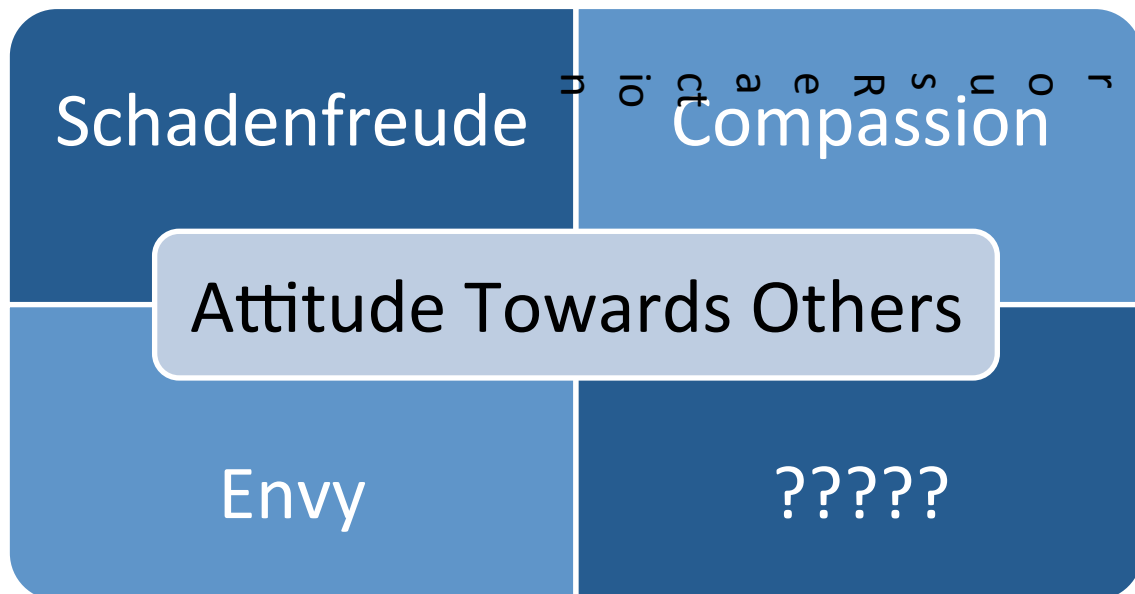
Note the universal joy, even from students who have not yet achieved this coveted award themselves.

S E F I S F \ M . S E T Y R E A

Generosity happens at the intersection of attitude and action. In terms of attitude:

- Envy is reacting cruelly to good happening to someone else
- “Schadenfreude” (German for “harm-joy”) is reacting cruelly to bad happening to someone else
- Compassion (meaning “shared suffering”) is reacting kindly to bad happening to someone else
- There is no word for reacting kindly to something good that happens to someone else
  - What should this word be?

### Something Bad Happened



### Something Good Happened

#### Living Generously: Abundance vs. Scarcity

One great battle of the world is abundance vs. scarcity:

- Giving vs. hoarding
- Loving vs. covering up
- Envy vs. compassion
- Schadenfreude vs. ????? [our word from the prior page]
- Freedom vs. fear



- Generosity vs. stinginess
- Living vs. dying

“The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your own mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.” [2 Corinthians 9:6-8]

Again, the key attribute is attitude. If we are lifted up by abundance, we always will have enough no matter how little we own. If we are bowed under by scarcity, we will never have enough no matter how much we have. Our alignment with abundance or scarcity determines our ability to give.

## The Generational Opportunity

A four generational model of American history:<sup>13</sup>

<u>Type</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>Birthdates</u>
Idealistic	Baby Boomers	1943-1960
Reactive	GenX	1961-1981
Civic	Millennial	1982-2003
Adaptive	Silent/Not Named	1925-1942; 2004-????

Historically (Revolutionary Era, WWII), the best generational alignment for problem-solving is:  
 Idealists in elderhood – provide visionary inspiration  
 Reactives in midlife – provide pragmatic, effective leadership  
 Civics in rising adulthood – provide cohesion and willingness to sacrifice

This is our current situation. Can we rise to the occasion and make progress solving some of our great social issues? Cultivating generosity is one key to our success. You can play a leading part.

## Conclusion

“Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.” *John Wesley*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from Strauss, William and Howe, Neil: *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, Quill Publishing, 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Attribution uncertain.