

Sharing Yourself with Others

By Liz Gibbons

When Pete gave the topic “Charity” for this week’s writing I immediately thought of big charitable organizations such as The American Red Cross which has been in the news raising funds to help the victims of hurricanes Harvey and Irma. We Americans are very generous when faced with helping our fellow man in a crisis. Thankfully these huge crises do not happen daily. Such monetary contributions are impersonal, as we do not know individually those who benefitted from our giving. However, giving through these organizations, when so many people are affected, is probably the most effective way to get aid to those who need it.

I have an issue with some other large organizations such as The American Cancer Society. It has raised untold sums of money and has little success to show for it. If they find a cure they are out of business. Hmm ... seems like a conflict of interest here.

Likewise, I will not give to solicitations over the telephone as the amount going for the cause may be minuscule compared to the expenses of the solicitation.

Looking deeper into the concept of charity, many of us do charitable acts daily and do not consider them as what is normally called charity. These acts are on a personal basis, usually for a friend or acquaintance, although they can also be impersonal. Examples are numerous.

- Being a sounding board for a friend who is facing a challenge. Often through your attentive listening the person finds a solution or sees the challenge from a different perspective.
- Taking a home-cooked meal to a family who is dealing with an illness or the death of a loved one.
- Helping someone pack to move to another home.
- Raking an elderly neighbor’s yard in the fall after the leaves have fallen.
- Calling a distance relative who is rather isolated.
- Giving encouragement to a young person to follow their dreams.
- Even in a crowded parking lot, letting the other person have the vacant parking spot that you both were aiming for could be considered an act of charity.

No matter what forms it takes, sharing material possessions or your time or talents, these are all acts of charity. Our religious institutions stress that it is more blessed to give than to receive, but that is only half of the formula. You cannot give unless someone else is willing to receive. For some people, this giving attitude is so deeply ingrained that they cannot gracefully receive from others.

And lastly, as you all well know, even though someone has been annoying, rude, or unreasonable, giving him or her a “piece of your mind” or “your finger” is not being charitable.