



DAY 05 - GIVING

LIVE THE FLOURISHING LIFE: FLOURISHING FAITH

People with a religious affiliation will, on average, give more than twice what people without a religion give. Even though giving is not an inherently spiritual practice, it is strongly correlated with faith. This perhaps shouldn't be surprising, considering that giving is a central practice in all the major religions of the world today. The tangible act of giving, be it of money or of time, is often spiritually motivated and spiritually fulfilling.

In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, giving is a command from God and is closely related to the command to love others. To help the poor and needy, in particular, is a moral obligation and an issue of justice. There are some nuances between these religions in how giving is understood and which motivations and practices are emphasised. However, all three share a basic view of giving as both a duty and a willing act of love, a belief that what a person has ultimately belongs to God, and the same focus on giving to the poor and needy. Giving is also an important practice in Buddhism, but it is considered a purely voluntary act rather than a duty. It involves not only the sharing of tangible goods and acts of service, but the sharing of love and support. This kind of self-giving is motivated by a belief that all things exist interdependently, and by a desire to relinquish material possessions in favour of kindness and compassion.

For a religious person, there are many spiritual benefits to practising generosity. Fulfilling a duty might provide a sense of peace or rightness with God; giving can play an important role in strengthening faith communities; it can be a way of outwardly demonstrating your faith; and the sacrifice involved in giving generously can serve as a reminder of the importance of your faith. But even giving that is not motivated by religious belief can have great spiritual benefits. Studies show that giving is satisfying because it elicits a pleasure response in the brain. There is also a strong causal relationship between giving and long-term happiness, including feelings of joy and contentment, life satisfaction among individuals and communities, reduced stress levels and other improved health outcomes. All of these general markers of well-being can contribute to your spiritual health. The authors of *The Paradox of Generosity* argue that 'giving we receive, grasping we lose'—'practices of

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generosity are actually likely instead to provide generous givers with essential goods in life—happiness, health, and purpose—which money and time themselves simply cannot buy.'

'Practices of generosity... provide generous givers with essential goods in life—happiness, health, and purpose—which money and time themselves simply cannot buy.'

Christian Smith & Hilary Davidson

Take time to consider your giving today. Think about our beliefs about giving and whether you are practising them. If you're not giving as much as you would like to, consider the following:

- What is a **cause or organisation** that is important to you which you could support? If you're considering a charity, check them out at [Charity Navigator](#).
- What **sacrifices** could you make to free up some financial resources to give?
- What **other resources** do you have to be generous with? Maybe you have spare time to volunteer, a skill you could offer, a spare room in your house you could open up, or some goods or assets you could donate. Learn more about different ways you can give [here](#).

If you feel that you are already practising generous giving, it's still worth asking yourself a few questions:

- Is your giving **really generous**? Does it involve sacrifice, or are you doing the bare minimum you feel obliged to when you could be doing much more?
- Are you giving **freely or begrudgingly**? There's nothing wrong with giving out of duty, but it could be spiritually damaging if it's making you proud or resentful and not accompanied by genuine love.
- Are you being **generous with all you have**? Maybe you give away a percentage of your income, but do you selfishly guard the rest, our other resources, or your time? Are you generous in your relationships with the people around you?

Giving as a spiritual practice is about more than just giving a set amount of money. It's about being thankful for what you have and willing to share it with others. It's about letting go of material things that provide a false sense of security and focusing instead on what you truly believe and value. This is the kind of generosity that will help your faith to flourish.