

The Wonderment of Giving
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Where has all the joy and wonderment in giving and serving gone? *Social Capital*, *Community Impact*, and *Strategic Philanthropy*; what do these words really mean? Have we veered so far into the gibberish of *jargon* and *professionalism* that we have lost the benevolence and wonderment that arise from our charitable acts? Jargon is not, however, the exclusive domain of charity. Business, government, and other parts of our society engage in what the Merriam Webster On-Line Dictionary defines as “obscure and often pretentious language marked by circumlocutions and long words.” Words do matter, and they matter most in our tradition of philanthropy because unlike other actions we might take in our daily lives, charity has a way of defining us and the relationships we seek with the beneficiary and with God. The use of circumlocutions obscures that connection.

The very definition of philanthropy means love of mankind. Every act of love or kindness to others is a way of seeking an authentic human bond in our high tech world of emails, tweets and nudges. Gift giving of our time, talent, or treasure is almost a sacred and spiritual act. Through giving and serving we convey to others the true autobiography of ourselves. Charity is a heartfelt act that creates an exchange or reciprocity between the person doing the giving and the person doing the receiving. St. Francis of Assisi said it best, “For it is in giving that we receive.”

The downturn in the economy and in our trust of elected leaders fills our everyday conversation and concern. This in turn has decreased America’s 2008 total giving by 5.7%, adjusted for inflation. [Giving USA](#), the bible of charitable giving statistics, has recorded this as the largest drop in charity since 1955! Let us commit ourselves to changing our distrust and despair and put the joy back into our charitable acts and let it begin today!

Let us begin to strive for simplicity and brevity in our conversations about pressing community needs. Let creditability lead our efforts, not commitment to a political ideology. Let us ask the hard questions, with reverence and respect, so that we might seek what we have in common and respect each other for our authentic differences. We need to strive for what the great Jewish Rabbi Maimonides said while preaching about charity (tzedakah), that we must “Anticipate charity by preventing poverty.”

God loves a cheerful giver, so let us look deep into our hearts, into what makes us human. We possess the ability to turn *Social Capital* into friendship; transform *Community Impact* into doing good; and commit that *Strategic Philanthropy* is as simple as tithing. If we can turn our money into hope and our serving into an outward act of faith in our fellow man, then charity and God will prevail.

The Chinese Taoist Philosopher Lao Tzu reminds us that, “Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.”

Rediscover the *Wonderment Of Giving!* Wrap your arms around your personal passions and the ideals that inspire you and make you who you are. Go forth confidently and know that you can change the world with a giving heart!