

WD September 26, 2022

## “Overcoming Charity Fatigue”

As a pastor of Grace Lutheran Church I understand the need for charities. I understand the hard work that goes into the fundraising process. As I sit down and share this I was recently, met at the door of Kroger with another charity I hadn’t heard of before but claimed to champion what I would still consider an important topic. But I hesitated because I didn’t know the organization. So, that got me thinking. I thought that this week I would just share a few thoughts on charities, which ones to pick and some suggestions of how to go about it.

According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), **more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations** are registered in the U.S. There are so many charities that it can be overwhelming. So where to start? Start with the Word. 2 Corinthians 9:7 tells us, “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Giving is naturally a part of the Christian life. The cheer in giving to anyone is in knowing that Jesus has already given Himself on the cross. Jesus is a giver of forgiveness in His cross and eternal life in his resurrection. So, to be a giver makes us like Jesus. That is the Lord’s gameplan for every Christian—shaping us to be Christlike. Dave Ramsey does a good job explaining this further. If we have something to give then let us give first and foremost to the glory of God. However, if I feel ambushed by someone who pressures me or guilts me into giving, I usually refuse to give anything. If I feel manipulated into giving I generally won’t. Giving should be your choice and it should be proactive, deliberate, and rewarding.

The best way of picking a charity is to start with what interests you most. Your choices include anything from churches to saving animals—it’s out there. So, how does one pick? For myself my first priority is the church and the preschool. The Word is my passion. But I have other interests as you may. You may be interested in giving blood to the Red Cross or even skills to recovery efforts. Often the charity you pick may be determined by what may have impacted your life, or a friend or neighbor, like giving to Cancer research. Or it may be just to help out a family member trying to raise money. Most of us for example don’t have much resistance when those cute little Girl Scouts come around in January. At church they know how to pounce. They are like little cookie pushers, cookie dealers selling boxes of tasty treats that we can’t resist—please may I have Samoa Carmel Chocolate Chips—(see what I did there). Watch out cookie lovers. Most of us do this anyway but starting with what is personally most interesting to us is a good place to start.

A second consideration is to pick something that is familiar and known by us or someone we trust. Proverbs 15:21 says, “Folly brings joy to one who has no sense, but whoever has understanding keeps a straight course.” We’ve all heard the horror stories. Do your homework.

I once worked with an organization during the tornado recovery in Henryville years ago. They came in with their trucks from out of town. It took a while but I eventually learned that they didn’t have a clue what they were doing as far as the recovery. I did learn that they were storm chasers and quick to collect funds when the need for help was fresh. They claimed to be a Christian organization which makes me cringe with disappointment and even some resentment. So, I generally recommend that one should start with what you may already be familiar with. And if something is new do a little homework to find out more about them.

Because of this I generally find myself giving to organizations that the church has already spent some time with, such as Choices Life Resource Center, Exit 0, Hope Southern Indiana, St. Elizabeth’s, Food for the Poor, To our Friends in Sudan an Haiti, etc. They all have a history, a track record that can be backed up with experience and years of ministry. If you do decide to give to a charity or ministry, that’s fine, but be deliberate and aware of what it’s actually doing with the money. For example, the bigger entities like Red Cross collect monies at all major storms. However, unless you specifically note where you want your donation to go your donation may simply end up in a general fund and may not be employed where you intended it. So, do your homework. Ask around. Talk to a representative of the entity you are giving to.

Next, when you give to a charity give without making a big deal of yourself. In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount Jesus talks about giving to others in Matt 6:1-4. “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So, when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be

honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Months back Pastor K in a sermon spoke about how the Hollywood types and Uber Rich do charities. They raise money, sure. But they give in order to be seen in their fancy dresses and designer suits; amongst ice sculptures and red-carpet entrances at exclusive locations. No outsider is usually welcomed to such parties; no one outside of the circle of rich friends. One has to ask then what is the effort really about? Rich people who are bored and looking for something to do? This is a modern picture of the pharisees of Jesus’ day. They made everything about themselves rather than about the Lord. On the other hand, the ones that impress us most are the ones who we find out later gave to a charity quietly. More impressive are the ones that only the Father sees and knows about.

Finally, don’t hesitate to say, “no” sometimes. If you have chosen a charity don’t be afraid to share that you’re concentrating your efforts there when approached by something new. Generally, my giving is to charities associated with the church that I’ve mentioned before. I also give blood to the Red Cross and volunteer to fix things when I can carve out the time. Otherwise, if spread around too much, what I give would become too diluted to be meaningful. The reality is that we are all limited. We simply don’t have the resources to give to 1.5 million charities or to everyone who asks. It may not be good timing. Something in your life may have changed like a job loss or car broke down, or an illness. Sometimes saying “no” is necessary and okay.

So here we are. It’s important to know why you are giving, to whom you are giving, and your personal motivation for giving. All of this matters. But let me say this; there is nothing more rewarding than seeing your giving amount to genuine help. When we took our first mission trip to south Florida and finished framing a ruined house after Hurricane Wilma that family could not have blessed us more with their smiles, tears, and gratitude. We can all agree that making a difference is always worth every penny and always worth our time and talents. Nothing blesses us more than being able to help others in meaningful ways.

Well, I hope that this was helpful to you. I pray that whatever you decided to give to that it more than anything honors the Lord. I pray that your charitable giving blesses you with joy.

Pastor Matt Woods  
John 3:30