



Today's topic is all about generosity. The first thing people often associate with the word has to do with money. How are you supporting the causes you believe in? We (Pastor Pete and Lynne) have always supported CrossWalk generously because we believe so strongly in what CrossWalk represents and does. This church touches on so many aspects of Shalom's pursuit of wellbeing! Food insecurity, recovery from addiction, childhood development, shelter for evacuees, support for immigration services, team sports, and of course, safe space for people to grow their spirituality by asking the toughest questions, which leads CrossWalk to stand boldly for grace and justice. For all of these reasons, and because CrossWalk is supported primarily by CrossWalkers (we are not a large organization with thousands of donors), of our monthly charitable giving, this place gets 90%.

The remaining 10% of our charitable giving supports people and causes that we – along with many, many others – also support. For example, we support the *Sierra Club* for their support of the environment, the *Giffords* organization for its work reducing gun violence, the *Association for Welcoming and Affirming Baptists (AWAB)* for their work supporting churches moving into a welcoming and affirming stance toward our LGBTQ neighbors. We also support *The Bible for Normal People* and Tom Oord's *Center for Open and Relational Theology* to help further their work. We support these and more because they are things we feel passionate about. How have you sorted out where you invest your financial generosity?

How do you determine how much to give? First, honor the principle that giving *something* is important. It supports important work in the world and it does a very important thing for us on our spiritual journey. Determining what "generosity" looks like for you requires reflection, planning, and commitment. Take time to work this out – the world needs help and your support matters, whatever the size of your gift!

The following is from Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and Douglas Carlton Abrams' [*The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*](#), (pp. 341-346). Kindle Edition.

Generosity Practices. Compassion, as we have discussed, is necessary but not sufficient. It is the impulse to help others, but the action that follows from that desire is generosity. Generosity practices are so important that they are formalized and even mandated in many of the world's religions. Here we have presented three forms of giving that are prescribed in Buddhism, which involve material giving, giving freedom from fear, and spiritual giving. Many Christians tithe their income, giving one-tenth of what they earn, and others expand this to giving one-tenth of time, talent, and treasure. It is in this regular concern for others that we experience the most joy.

1. **Material giving.** There is no substitute for helping to lessen the inequality and injustice that are such enduring features of our world. Whether you tithe or give dana, this is really the beginning of weekly and even daily practice of thinking about how you can give to others.
2. **Giving freedom from fear.** This can involve giving protection, counsel, or solace. This is how we can give our time and attention to others. Who needs your presence today? Do your children, your spouse, your parents, your colleagues, your friends, or even the stranger on the street need your compassion and your caring? To whom can you reach out to support?
3. **Spiritual giving.** You don't have to be a "holy man" or a spiritual teacher to give in this way. Spiritual giving can involve giving wisdom and teachings to those who may need them, but it can also involve helping others to be more joyful through the generosity of your own spirit. Seek to be an oasis of caring and concern as you live your life. Simply smiling at others as you walk down the street can make an enormous difference in the quality of human interaction in your community. And it is this interaction that is most responsible for the quality of human life on our increasingly crowded and lonely planet, our affluent and still impoverished world.

Joy Meditation—The Eight Pillars. This is a meditation that allows you to review the eight pillars and to use them when you encounter a problem, confront pain, or face suffering, whether these are major life challenges or daily dissatisfaction (or dukkha). This meditation is meant to smooth the ride on the bumpy road of life. It builds on the earlier meditations but can be used independently. The eight pillars are the practices that lead to greater inner peace and greater joy.

1. Sit comfortably. You can sit in a chair with your feet on the floor or cross-legged. Place your hands comfortably on your legs or in your lap.
2. Take several long breaths through your nose. Let your body begin to relax. Reflect on each of the pillars, and notice as your body relaxes even more and your heart feels lighter.
3. Let your problem come to mind. Reflect on the situation, person, or challenge that is causing you pain or suffering.
4. Perspective. See yourself and your problem from a wider perspective. Try to step back from yourself and your problem. See yourself and your struggle as if you were watching a movie about your life. Now think about this problem from the future, from a year or a decade from now. Recognize that your problem will pass. See how your problem shrinks as you see it in the wider context of your life.
5. Humility. Now see yourself as one of the seven billion people and your problem as part of the pain and suffering that so many human beings experience. You can see your problem as part of the unfolding and interdependent drama of life on our planet and even see yourself from space, or from a God's-eye perspective. See how deeply connected we are with one another. You are part of the flowering of the universe in your particular place and time. Your connection to others makes you much stronger and more capable of solving your problem. Let yourself feel love and appreciation for all of those who have contributed to who you are and who support you in your life.
6. Humor. Smile and see if you can chuckle at your problem, at your shortcomings, at your frailties. Try to find the humor in the situation and in your struggle. Even if it is a very grave or serious situation, there is often some humor that can be found. The human drama is often a comedy, and laughter is the saving grace. This ability to laugh allows us to accept life as it is, broken and imperfect, even as we aspire for a better life and a better world.
7. Acceptance. Accept that you are struggling and accept that you have human limitations. Remind yourself that these painful realities do happen to us, to those we love, and in our world. Acknowledge that you cannot know all the factors that have led to this event. Accept that what has happened has already happened and that there is nothing you can do to change the past. Now remind yourself: "In order to make the most positive contribution to this situation, I must accept the reality of its existence."
8. Forgiveness. Place your hand on your heart and forgive yourself for any part you have played in creating this problem or this situation. Recognize that you are only human and that you will inevitably fall short of your aspirations. You will hurt and be hurt by others. See the shared humanity of any others who are involved and forgive them for their part and for their human limitations.
9. Gratitude. Think of three or more people or things that you are grateful for in this problem or your life right now. Can you find ways in which your problem is actually contributing to your life and growth? Are there people or things that are supporting you to face this challenge?
10. Compassion. Put your hand on your heart or place the palms of your hands together at your heart. Have compassion for yourself and for how you are struggling. Remember it takes time to grow and learn. You are not meant to be perfect. Suffering is inevitable. It is part of the fabric of life. There are going to be frustrations in any life. The goal is to use them as something positive. Feel the light of loving-kindness shining from your heart throughout your body. Now send that compassion to your loved ones, to anyone you are struggling with, and out to all who are in need of love and compassion.
11. Generosity. Feel the deep generosity that is in your heart. Imagine yourself radiating this generosity of the spirit to all around you. How can you give your gifts? How can you transform your problem into an opportunity to give to others? When we give joy to others, we experience true joy ourselves.