

Size of one's heart measured by others' perspectives

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OUR VOICE is published to provide an income opportunity for marginalized people in our community, as well as to provide them with a tool for use in communicating with others about important economic, social and environmental issues that greatly affect their lives.

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Invites your contributions and input.

Assumes letters sent to the editor are for publication, unless otherwise indicated.

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My friends tell me that I lack empathy; that is to be able to associate myself emotionally with how they feel. Admittedly, there may be more than a pound of truth to their complaint. I do not give that much thought to how the everyday normal person is affected by life's very common challenges. I try not to be rude to people. I do use my manners; this is one way that I show my respect to God.

My heart, however, absolutely plummets when I see people sleeping on the sidewalks. So many poor and homeless people have fallen through the cracks of society's cold, rock-hard cement, and are trapped like helpless bugs programmed to survive at any cost.

I have no choice, I have to help them. God please, help me to help them.

Yes, I am still smoking, spreading carcinogenic dust to those who choose not to smoke. Not until now, though, have I truly understood what it is like to be an addict. Never again will I look at another addict, whatever his or her addiction, with disgust and shame.

I seldom tell my mother that I love her; actually, many a time I have said to her that I hate her - that is pretty cold, I admit. I do however have a great deal of respect for my mother, and I vow that one day I will make sure she is honoured as a true hero.

The three powerful words, "I love you," I keep for my one and only daughter. She is the one girl in my life that I don't have to impress or prove myself to; my daughter is my best friend. Many a time, her actions drive me mad however I love her just the same.

I am very critical of society. Quite often, I find that I do not like to see the injustices going on around me; it is my feeling that inequality simply does not have to exist, especially in a world where we do have the power to do something about it. What is wrong with our society

today? Why can people not see the bigger picture?

It is my observation that we are really not that smart; we suffer from problems that do not burden other mammals, yet we are not clever enough to solve them.

Yes, I am critical. At times, I cannot seem to stop myself; perhaps low self-esteem and memories of bad experiences come into play here. I have, however, seen a beautiful, fantastic future in my dreams. It will absolutely break my heart if society never gets the chance to experience such a future.

I simply cannot deal with the idea of God playing favourites among people, whether those people are better looking, smarter, more skilled and talented, or richer. Every single person on this earth has his or her own special strengths that should be acknowledged, valued and

given credit for.

Individuals blessed with the gift of a loving and caring heart, a beautiful spirit, strength of character, compassion, empathy, generosity and a sense of humour are as vital to the well-being of our society as those blessed with other gifts. These are the people that hold our world together, saving us from utter chaos.

With all people there exists a duality of light and dark. Each of us has a heart, and each of us has a harder core. In the spirit of giving, let us acknowledge our darkness, so that we realize exists. More importantly, however, let us let our hearts of light cast their glow on those around us, all the time seeking the light that shines on us from the hearts of other people.

- Darryl Learie

I do not like to see the injustices going on around me ... inequality simply does not have to exist ...

One crucial step toward inner peace and harmony is the understanding that you 'Never Lose By Giving'

There are those of us who truly believe that the most important thing is not and has never been "how much you give". "The spirit in which you give" is what really matters.

There is a parable in which a widow gave her last penny; this penny was all she had. The widow was then compared to a rich man who gave of the 'fat' of his money only. The message here is that no matter what you give, it is the spirit in which you give that counts. Even if the rich man gave only a very small part of his riches, it would be a total blessing to him if he did it from his heart. It is not the amount or the percentage that counts.

We may assume the widow was making a sacrifice in giving all she had, however, she was not. This woman gave out of her love for God and a true desire to help others. There was no sacrifice, only love.

Before you can truly give, you must love. When you

love, you give because you have chosen to. You do not harbor a single thought that your recipient owes you a thing, yet you can acknowledge that your spirit of giving will return to you in another form, by another means. The details regarding the return do not really matter to you; you simply know that it will somehow happen.

Picture a big ball, and imagine it suspended in the air; imagine it is transparent; imagine it is made of an unbreakable, sphere of water. Think of this ball of water as our spiritual oneness, where each molecule represents a spirit and we are one with our creator and with each other. Imagine yourself as a tiny speck of that water and you give something of yourself to another tiny speck. The ball neither gains nor loses anything in the transaction. There is but a slight movement inside.

We are all one. Anything you do or give to another, you are also doing or giving to yourself. Anything you do or give to yourself, you are doing or giving to another.

All of our goals should aim to strike a balance on this earth. If you have more of something than another, share it. You will not lose it. It is just placed where it can be better utilized. Don't think of just material and physical things either. Share your abundance of happiness with those that have less. Share your knowledge with those that have less. Share your wisdom with those that have less.

To Give First, you Love First, and you give without effort and without reservation. You give because you choose to and because you desire the best for all those around you. You Give First, knowing you have not lost anything. We are one. What you give to another you give to yourself. Even Christ said, "What you do for the least of your brethren, you do for me also". He said this because we are all one. He knew without question this was true. We all must work to know it too.

Christmas is a time for sharing and being with people we love. It is not about the quantity of things we give but rather the sharing of special times together. So consume less, consume wisely, and love lots more because it is a small planet we share. Remember, "The best things in life aren't things!" HAVE FUN!

- Your Friends at Earth's General Store

OUR VOICE would like to thank Josh Klassen for working so hard to provide us with the wonderful cover illustration depicting our theme of 'Ginving' for December.

We would also like to warmly welcome our new feature columnist, Douglas Krefting. Doug, who sits on the OUR VOICE Board of Directors, will regularly share with us his thoughts and life experiences in his column, 'Reflections on ...', found on page 12. of this issue.

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