

Thrift
and
Generosity

The Joy of Giving

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• FOREWORD •

What a great little book! You are in for a treat as you read this superb publication on two subjects—thrift and generosity—that should be of vital concern and interest to every person.

This is the first time I've ever read something that puts thrift and generosity together and explains so beautifully their natural connection.

Thrift is clearly a virtue. Dr. Templeton makes that point plainly and convincingly in the following pages. I resonate strongly with what he writes about thrift because I consider myself a thrifty person. Waste of any kind is abhorrent to me.

On the other hand, being generous and sharing with others fills me with joy. And, Dr. Templeton writes so beautifully about the joy that generosity brings to the life of any person.

You are about to be enlightened and enriched as you read this magnificent essay. The experience you are about to have should make you more thrifty and more generous. And that should make you a better and more joyous person. Keep reading and don't stop until you've read every word. You'll be glad you did!

Millard Fuller
Founder and President
Habitat for Humanity International



• THRIFT AND GENEROSITY •



• INTRODUCTION •

Human beings are united, among other things, by a common striving for happiness. Everyone wants to be happy. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson specifically cites the universal goals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We pursue happiness in different ways. Though they may not find it there, some pursue happiness by accumulating material things. Some emphasize building close relationships, while others seek happiness in their vocation or through certain activities or hobbies. But we all want happiness. Most would agree there is something missing—something wrong, something fractured—in the person who claims that happiness is not important to him or to her.

My hope for this book, however, is both to challenge and to enable readers to strive for something even more significant, something even greater than happiness. That something is joy. To be sure, happiness and joy are similar concepts. They are related emotions. They bring to mind similar states of mind or being. In fact, I can appreciate that some would see no difference between the two.

To my way of thinking, however, happiness and joy are not the same. Both, of course, carry positive connotations. But when I think of happiness, I think of a state that in some way is tied to circumstances. I think of a state of being or feeling that to some extent exists at the surface of our lives, something transient, changeable. Happiness is real, but potentially impermanent. It is influenced by prevailing conditions.

Joy, in contrast, suggests something deeper, more lasting. Joy implies a state of mind or being that dwells in the depths of the soul. It implies a degree of contentment too strong and

secure to be influenced by the changing circumstances of our lives. Negative developments may deprive a person of outward happiness, but nothing can take away that person's inner joy.

In our quest for joy, we will focus in particular on two important virtues: thrift and generosity. Both of these virtues (but especially thrift) have to some extent been forgotten in modern times—or at least greatly underappreciated as virtues.

Each of these qualities—thrift and generosity—is a virtue in its own right. This is to say, there is great merit in practicing thrift, even if it is practiced independently of other virtues. The same is true of generosity. In these pages, we will examine various aspects of both thrift and generosity, including the relationship between practicing these virtues and the striving toward spiritual maturity.

My hope, however, is that this book will make a unique contribution as a result of its focus on practicing these virtues in concert with one another. The direction of this book is well

summarized by these words from the founder of Methodism, John Wesley: “Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” Through his prolific writings and speaking engagements, Wesley earned a small fortune over his lifetime. Nevertheless, he was continually giving to others in ways that he felt would build the Kingdom. At the end of his life, his physical possessions included just one well-worn coat and two silver spoons.

I believe that as much as either thrift or generosity has to offer independently, they offer far, far more when practiced together. Indeed, my hope is that we will discover that the whole that results from practicing these virtues in tandem will greatly exceed the sum of the parts. And I am further convinced that this line of thinking will move us closer to the goal of discovering and experiencing true joy.