

A Guided Approach To Helping Others

I believe most people want to make the world a better place. We try and raise our children to be caring and considerate people. We drive courteously, (when possible), wait in lines, (when necessary), use polite words and do many other things to make the world just a tiny bit better. However, we are all capable of doing more.

What do you do when you see a beggar in the street. You know what the "right" thing to do is, but how often do you, and me, all of us, just walk right by? It's not that we don't want to help. But there are so many excuses not to give something. How about, "I am in a big hurry now. I can give something later when I'm under less pressure." Or, "I don't think I have any small change." Or, "That person might have a disease, I better not stop. I think I'll even go faster and walk by with my head turned away so I won't catch anything." I'm sure you can add to that poor list of excuses.

But let's say we want to be kind, and we decide we are going to make a big effort in this direction, from now on, like a "New Year's Resolution" to improve the world around us, instead of just ourselves. Did you know that someone, almost one thousand years ago, created a list of the best ways to give charity, or help someone, in order of each different act's worthiness?

That person's name was Maimonides. He lived, studied, taught, was a trained physician and a scholar in Cairo, Egypt in the second half of the twelfth century A.D. Maimonides was the leader of the Jewish community in Cairo, and he is well-known as an Aristotelian philosopher and the great codifier of Jewish Law into his opus magnum called the Mishneh Torah. Within the pages of this great work Maimonides listed eight different ways a person can give charity, in order of their merit. Let's take a look at his list, and make some comments.

Giving charity unwillingly. At least you're giving something, begrudgingly yes, but still giving. It doesn't make either party, the giver or the receiver feel great, but at least it solves the urgent problem of giving the person in need a little something so he can live a few more moments.

Giving happily, but not enough. Well, that is certainly a step up, but wouldn't it have been better to give just a tad more?

Giving to the poor after being asked. It is a bit embarrassing that the poor person had to ask. That brings us to the next level:

Giving to the poor person before he actually has to ask. You saved him embarrassment, that was really nice.

It is even better if the giver does not know who is receiving the charity, even if the recipient might know who gave. It is just an additional level of avoiding embarrassment.

To know the identity of the person receiving your charity, but he does not know who you are. In this way the giver cannot get "kudos" for his act of kindness. After all, maybe he is donating thousands of dollars to become "the well-known philanthropist." This is not necessarily a bad thing, this is a pretty high level of giving, there are only two that are higher, but isn't it even more amazing if you give without getting "honor" in return?

Giving in such a way that no one knows who is giving nor who is receiving. This is called, "A good deed performed only for the sake of heaven."

We have arrived now at the highest level of charity, which almost doesn't even look like charity, but it is the best way of all you can help a person in need. And that is to either give him a job, or otherwise help in such a way that he can become self-sufficient and no longer be in need of charity.

It's the principle of, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, but give him a fishing pole and you feed him for life."

Good luck, and I hope you can help the world become just a smidgen better which is all I am trying to do myself.

About the Author

The author of this article, Emily Salisbury, thinks the tastiest example of this highest level of charity is [Connie's Bakery](#)

Source: <http://www.articlegods.com>