

good manners

Finding the Joy in Giving

Christine Chen, contributing editor
www.gpprotocol.com

“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that you cannot sincerely try to help another without helping yourself.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson



Giving and the joy giving brings back to the giver is indeed the awesome result. This is not just a good feeling. It's that deep, heartfelt, passionate feeling that surpasses happiness. Joy surpasses those fleeting moments of happiness that can sometimes be superficial and short lived.

Several years ago my daughter was invited to go on a mission trip to an orphanage in Mexico. She was fourteen at the time. It's no secret that many teens have a tendency of being, to put it bluntly, self-absorbed. This

mission trip was a working trip. A giving trip. A take-yourself-out-of-yourself trip. Those going were expected to do manual labor, spend time with the children, and eat and sleep at the orphanage. The accommodations were anything but luxurious. My husband and I wondered what kind of an experience our daughter would have. Would she work hard in the unbearable heat? Would she interact with the children? Would she complain about the food? And, how could she possibly survive without phones, TV's, computers, electronics? To our surprise and delight, when she returned, we were greeted by a different person. It was amazing, in just ten short days our daughter was more interested in the needs of others than herself. No complaints. No whining. No unhappiness. Amidst the lack of air conditioning, good food, comfortable bed, and modern-day luxuries, my daughter, according to her, had the best time of her life. She came home with plans of adopting a few children when she turned eighteen - never mind that she didn't have a job or any idea how she would support them. All she knew was that she wanted to, had to, do something for those beautiful children. Ironically, she was most impressed that those children, those orphans, were filled with contentment and joy while lacking the comforts most of us enjoy.

You see, a teenage girl who was accustomed to having every need, and even want, met each and every day, found true joy while giving to others. She took herself out of herself. She showed love. Her joy was found in serving others. Mother Teresa once said, "It's not how much we give but how much love we put into the giving." Giving with a heart filled with gratitude and compassion fills us with love.

Here we are in the month where giving is on everyone's mind. We have lists of who we must remember. It seems the list gets longer each year. There are family members, friends, teachers, neighbors, co-workers, bosses, hairdressers, postal workers, babysitters It's enough to make a person dizzy. So dizzy, in fact, that maybe we are missing the point of the holidays. Whether you are celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, or another holiday, this is typically the time we like to express gratitude in the form of gifts to the people we care about in our lives.

There are many ways to give during this holiday season. There are countless opportunities, even in our own communities, to give. But,

remember, giving doesn't always come wrapped in a beautiful package. Consider some of these ideas as you make this year's list.

- Participate in one of these fantastic programs: Salvation Army Angel Tree, Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child, Project Linus, One Warm Coat, The United Way Project Shoebox, ADRA's Really Useful Gift Catalog, Operation Give
- Visit a local nursing home. Take a plant or small gift to an elderly person that is alone.
- Volunteer at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen.
- Purchase gifts from A Fair Trade Christmas. These lovely items are handmade in developing countries.
- Bake homemade items for those in public service - firefighters, EMT's, police, postal couriers.
- Donate to a cause on behalf of family or friends.
- Use your talents to bring joy to those in the hospital or nursing home - play the piano, sing, read.
- Write a note to those you appreciate, to those who have been a blessing, to those who have helped you throughout the year.

This holiday season does not have to be filled with stress, busyness, and debt. Make a decision to begin the journey of giving to others in meaningful ways. But don't let the journey stop on December 31. Continue on throughout the following year. No matter the ups and downs that we all face, you will find joy. My daughter found joy, true joy, while giving to others. "Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy." — Thich Nhat Hanh.

© 2012 by Christine Chen

[Archives](#) | [Go to current issue](#) | [Search](#) | [Site Map](#)

© 2010 Good Living Enterprises, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Photo credits: Beverli Alford and Seth Blaustein. Site by [Ariela Steif](#).