

How much does a good person help others?

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA. May 2023

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

We kindle this chalice flame because there is darkness

In our world, the shadows of injustice, oppression, hunger, and pain fill too many lives with gloom

We light this small flame

Not because it will vanquish all darkness

But because it is a start

Because rather than condemn the dark

We have chosen to bring light - *Rev. Andy Pakula*

Check-in/Sharing: This is the time to mention any issues or events on your mind that you would like to share. Community Service follow-up.

Topic: How much does a good person help others?

When thinking of the qualities of a 'good person', words like helpful, giving, sharing, willing, and generous come to mind. There is so much needed by our immediate family, extended family, church, local community, state, country, and world. Most of us want to think of ourselves as "good people" — and most of us have been taught that good people help others when they can. How can we decide how much and what help to give others? Would a 'good person' even think of themselves?

For example, a sibling needs financial help. You are getting along ok, so you help out this month. Next month you do too, and then also a third month. Your sibling is extremely appreciative ... and yet they don't tell you that it is time to stop. Do you stop? When do you stop? How do you decide?

It is perhaps simpler to discuss helping when it is financial, but the same issues come up regarding time and emotional or physical care. How much is enough? How much is too much? Not for them — for *you*. Where do you fit into the picture? Do you fit into the picture?

"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." - *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

If it is wrong to view ourselves as more important than others, then it is wrong to view others as more important than ourselves. The equality of human beings means that being good to others and being good to ourselves are equally

important, so we should treat ourselves as well as we treat others — no more and no less.” - *Jeremy Shapiro*

“I have come to believe that caring for myself is not self-indulgent. Caring for myself is an act of survival.” - Audre Lorde

“Rest and self-care are so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.”
- *Eleanor Brown*

“How wrong we would be to stop helping anyone because we cannot help everyone.” - *Charles Swindoll*

“As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.” - *Maya Angelou*

Possible Questions for Discussion:

- How do you decide how much you can help? What factors go into making those kinds of decisions for you?
- Can you describe a situation in which you contributed more help (of any kind) or less help than you probably should have? How did you decide that it was too much or not enough, and was that for you or for them?
- How do you decide where and whom to help with your time, talent and treasure? What situations pull you to contribute more than others?
- When do you feel a tension between giving to others and doing things for yourself? Clearly you need to survive, but how much beyond survival is ok while still thinking of yourself as a good person?
- What ways have you found to take care of yourself that have worked for you? How do you decide what “taking care of yourself” entails?
- How has your approach to giving to others versus doing things for yourself changed as your life circumstances have changed?
- Can you describe when helping yourself made it possible to take care of others?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions and then share).

Wrapping Up: How did you like this topic and session?

Closing Words

“Be sure to secure your own mask before assisting others” — *FAA-mandated pre-take-off announcements*