

Lesson Plan for Charitable Giving

FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE RELIGION CLASS

Teacher: George Favell, Verbum Dei High School, Los Angeles, California

Day 1

Introduced the program and the idea.

Discussed the difference between Charity and Justice actions.

- Charitable giving can assist in both Charity actions and Justice actions.
- Charity is a short-term response to an immediate need. It is typified by the story of the Good Samaritan.
- Justice is a change in the underlying causes of a problem. It is typified by the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

Students were given a handout with several short scenarios, asking them to discern whether it is a Charity or Justice issue.

Day 2

Students were given the following reading:

Religious Basis for Charitable Giving
By Yvonne M. Brake, Yvette McMillan
Graduate Student, Case Western Reserve University

Definition

The beliefs of many religious faiths encourage charitable activity by its members. The reasoning and origin of this encouragement varies from one group to another, though similarities in the basis for charitable giving emerge. In three Judeo-Christian religious traditions, it is no surprise that the original sources promoting giving are sacred writings and the scripture of the Bible.

Additional reasoning for charitable giving among these groups in America results from the manner in which our nation's history has created specific needs for specific groups. The needs of the Catholic communities varied from those of Jewish congregants and, unsurprisingly, early African American Protestants had many basic and broad needs as they struggled to survive oppression and gain rights.

Important to the discussion of giving, even in a religious context, is the awareness of faith-based language used to refer to similar terms and behaviors in diverse faiths. For example, Christians often use the term " **stewardship** " when referring to financial giving. Yet, Jews use " **tzedakah** " to refer to "acts of charity" which include charitable giving (though the literal translation means "righteousness"). A general definition of "charity" is: "A voluntary giving of money or other help to those in need" (Bentley et al., 15).

Historic Roots

Members of the Jewish faith are called to "repair the earth" through giving on various levels, which also include volunteering and monetary gifts. Jewish philanthropy additionally promotes community building. Enactment of the Catholic faith includes charitable acts of kindness to the poor and downtrodden and striving for social justice. Members of the Protestant faith are encouraged to serve The Lord and express their love for Him by serving as He did, by helping the poor and oppressed through service-based activity and financial gifts.

As with many religious denominations in the U.S., Jews, Catholics, and African American Protestants at first established segregated ministry outreach and charitable works to serve primarily their own communities. Catholics and Jews established hospitals and other charitable organizations to help address the needs of those within their respective communities. Jewish Associations in New York in the early 1900s often addressed specific causes, such as burying the dead, ministering to the sick, and supporting welfare services. In the Ante-Bellum period, Catholics defined social reform in a traditional and broad sense, directing church members to aid the poor, the hungry, and the homeless.

Religious basis for giving by African American Protestants has, historically, been crises driven. Due to social stresses throughout history, from slavery, to northern migration, to poverty, to Civil Rights participation, giving occurred primarily through the Black church to assist victims or address the need of the time. The church provided for the socially and economically distressed through formal and informal giving and volunteering. Health care, education, social services, and political empowerment were major areas of philanthropic need from early times. By 1793, independent black churches in the North began to assume the charitable missions of the Free African Society, agitating for social, political, and economic rights, which at the time were restricted to whites. Religious charitable institutions such as orphanages, schools, benevolent societies, and poor-relief organizations emerged in the Cleveland, Ohio area around the mid-1800s.

Importance

The religious basis for giving has led to both complementary and competing efforts among Protestant, Catholic and Jewish denominations. For example, because many Catholics interpret the bible and calls from the Vatican to work toward social justice, a large number of American Catholics protest the death penalty. This is an example of complementary giving when the church's resources (from many different parishes) are used jointly to spread this message against "state-sanctioned murder." Yet, differences in the interests of one particular congregation to another congregation of the same Jewish faith may create a situation where tzedakah (giving) is being directed toward diverse causes. For example, one Jewish reform congregation may decide to donate funds and volunteer at a local retirement community while another temple sponsors a reading program for underprivileged children. This can be seen as competing efforts.

On a different note, the religious basis for giving could impact how the needs of the larger American population are met if the U.S. government begins giving public funds to congregations. Historically the Constitution of the United States of America established the

separation of Church and State, which requires religious organizations to rely completely upon donations for its support and for the support of any of its charitable acts. Yet, the current presidential administration could change how congregations function through the establishment of faith-based initiative funding that would allow public money to supplement a congregation's charitable activities. Also, the reasons for and focus of each faith will affect what needs in society they work to address.

Ties to the Philanthropic Sector

Under the Constitution, voluntarism became the basis of the organization of religious activity in the United States. Since the Constitution separates Church and State, religious congregations became a new sector of society, the philanthropic sector, separate from the government and business (for-profit) sectors. This means that congregations do not need to pay taxes, leaving more money for charitable work and addressing the needs of church or synagogue members. It also removes most governmental restrictions on the types of charitable giving chosen by congregants. Interestingly, well over half of the total yearly financial donations in the U.S. by individuals are given to congregations (Saxon-Harrold, 9). Also, the most generous contributors are individuals who attend a congregation regularly (Ibid., 9).

Taken from:

<http://www.learningtogive.org/papers/index.asp?bpid=55>

They then wrote a one-page summary on the reading.

We then discussed the reading and their summaries in class.

We then went to the following website and discussed criteria for wise giving:

<http://www.give.org/standards/newcbbbstds.asp>

Day 3

We went to the computer lab. I gave them the PowerPoint presentation on Philanthropy.

The students worked through the word study, using dictionary.com.

Then they were given this web address to find a charity of their choice, using the criteria they learned about.

<http://www.give.org/reports/index.asp>

They selected their charity and began to create a PowerPoint presentation using the criteria given in my Powerpoint presentation.

Day 4

Continued work on their presentations.

Day 5

Each student gave his presentation in front of the class.

Day 6

Students were presented with their charity checks and made brief statements as to why they chose their charity.

They filled out their checks and sent them.

They presented to Charity Checks a binder with print outs of their PowerPoint presentations