

Giving ... Nourishment for the Soul

We are in the midst of the giving season. But, let's not stop here. Let's think of giving as one of those actions we commit to doing all year long – not just during the month of December. We can all give – whether it's our money, time, talent, a smile or a kind word.

No matter our status in life, we can all do just a little bit more. During this season of giving, I am issuing a challenge: do more, dig a little deeper. Ask yourself: “Why should I do more? How can I do more? What more can I do?”

Giving matters! Pause for a moment and reflect on when or how you became aware of the importance of giving. For most of us, it came from an early childhood experience.

Take me for example. From early childhood I was surrounded by examples of people who gave and gave and gave – whether they had a little or a lot. And, most had a little. My greatest role model was Ms. Arcenia, my next door neighbor. In my eyes and the eyes of many of the neighborhood children, Ms. Arcenia was a success. She exemplified bigness, which we labeled success. We thought of her as successful (and rich) because she drove a big car, lived in a big house surrounded by lots of land and trees, wore big hats, and worked in a big grocery store instead of as a domestic worker or field hand like most of the other adults I came in contact with. Everyone, including my parents, liked, admired and respected Ms. Arcenia.

I later learned, however, that my parents had other reasons for admiring and respecting her. It was not about what she had, but what she did. They admired her for her capacity to love, to forgive, and to give of herself – her time, her money, her kindness. Ms. Arcenia was a spiritual woman. On more than one occasion, I remember her saying “I give because I have, I have because I give. Therefore, I am never without.”

When I became an adult, I realized that Ms. Arcenia really didn't have *that* much. The car, house, hats, and even the grocery store were not *that* big. They all just seemed so big because what she had, she gave freely. Therefore, she was never without.

Why give? We've all heard the saying, “The more you give, the more you'll receive.” While that's true, it's not the real reason for giving. You give because it's the right thing to do. It's empowering – for the giver as well as the receiver.

Giving is nourishment for the soul. As Maya Angelou so eloquently stated, “I have found that among the other benefits, giving benefits the soul of the giver.”

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