

# *Human Gifts: Giving to Transform Ourselves, Others and the World*

## by James Hallam

### 1. Love

- Who do you find easy to love, and who is most difficult to love?
- To what extent is your ability to love affected by your own state of mind as opposed to the potential object of your love?
- Do you agree with Hallam that love is the grounding or bedrock of the Christian ethic?
  - How might non-Christians react to this claim?
- [9] “The essential thing is not to feel love, but to do love. We do not feel then act; we act, then we feel.” – quoting Michalson
  - Put this into your own words
- Hallam (and others) claim that Jesus mandates we love ourselves.
  - Can you support this claim with things Jesus said and did?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

### 2. Kindness

- What are some good examples of kindnesses you’ve experienced?
- What are some examples of kindnesses you’ve given?
- When do you find it hardest to be kind?
- [16] Were you surprised at the rabbit experiment Hallam described which found that rabbits receiving kindness had 60 percent fewer fatty deposits in their blood?
  - How has kindness affected your health?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

### 3. Empathy

- How do you react to empathy vs. sympathy?
- Share an experience where someone showed you empathy. *Hospice*
- [23] Do you find yourself falling into Hallam’s proposed human nature of denying others empathy?
- In what ways do you see Jesus as empathetic?
- [23] “It is difficult to feel alone when someone is crying with us.”
- Other reflections on the chapter?

### 4. Compassion

- What’s the difference between compassion and sympathy?
- Who are some of the most compassionate people you know?
  - Do they have any other common characteristics?
- [28] Hallam notes that compassion comes with an emphasis on *\*doing\** and gives the example of the Good Samaritan.
  - What are the actions done by your compassionate examples?
- When have people been compassionate to you?
- What blocks you from being compassionate to others?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

### 5. Helpfulness

- As you’ve gotten older, have you been more or less apt to ask for help?
- Why are we reticent to ask for help?

- [39] “...in answering the cry for help, we often think we know better than others what they need.”
  - Can you think of examples where you’ve fallen into this trap?
- Who are the helpful people in your life?
- What do we have to do as a nation to be helpful to people in need?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 6. Presence

- Can you think of times when someone’s mere presence, regardless of what they said, provided much-needed comfort?
- Can you give an example of when you have been present for someone in need?
- Who can you think of who might need your presence today?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 7. Listening

- Who are the good listeners in your life?
- Do you think of yourself as a talker or a listener, or both?
- Do you have any suggested practices that help you with listening?
- [52] “We feel that we must always have advice ready in response to another, even when they are not looking for it.”
  - Why do you think we do this?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 8. Touch

- What has your experience been with social “touching” as a result of COVID?
  - Do you think things have forever changed or are we reverting to the pre-COVID norm?
- Are you a “hugger”? Why or why not?
- How do you discern whether someone is receptive to touch?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 9. Acceptance

- Who or what behavior might you deem unacceptable for the sanctuary during worship?
  - How do you think Jesus would react to this person or behavior?
- Do you think our lack of church diversity is due to lack of acceptance? Why or why not?
- Hallam suggests that we must accept ourselves first, before offering this gift to others.
  - In what ways do you fail to accept yourself?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 10. Affirmation

- To what extent do you crave or even need affirmation?
- How much affirmation did you receive as a child?
  - How much do you extend to your children?
- [73] “We are to let others know they are special not because of what they do but because of who they are.”
  - What are your reactions to this?
- Other reflections on this chapter?

## 11. Time

- Do you, like Hallam, find yourself paying more attention to the ages people die in their obituaries?
- Looking back at your life, are you satisfied with the way you’ve allocated your time?
  - If not, how would you change things?

- Can you give examples of meaningful gifts of time you've given and received?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 12. Patience

- In what situations do you find yourself being most impatient?
- Why is driving such a strong source of impatience?
  - Compare it to other modes of transportation.
- Are you more patient with children or older adults? Why?
- What strategies do you use to help be more patient?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 13. Friendship

- How would you define a friend?
  - Is there an essential quality to all your good friends?
- In Stephen King's *The Body*, later made into the movie *Stand By Me*, the author quotes "I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve."
  - How true is this quote for you?
- Do you place more of a priority on having many friends, or having fewer, close friends? Why?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 14. Vulnerability

- Have you witnessed the reciprocity in transparency that Hallam mentions?
- To what extent were you conditioned to hide your feelings in childhood?
  - Who did this conditioning? Parents, teachers, friends, others?
- When do you think Jesus was transparent and when was he reserved?
- With whom are you able to be vulnerable?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 15. Forgiveness

- What Biblical passages come to mind when you think of forgiveness?
  - "not 7 times, but 77 times"
  - *Lord's Prayer*
  - *Prodigal Son*
  - "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."
  - "your sins are forgiven" – prostitute, paralytic man, ...
- In what situations do you find it most difficult to forgive?
- When have you experienced benefits from forgiving someone else? How did it help you?
- [106] "Sometimes, however, the hardest person to forgive is oneself."
  - How do you find this to be true?
  - Why is this the case?
- When have you received the gift of forgiveness?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 16. Gratitude

- What was your experience with writing thank-you notes when you were a child?
- [112] "Gratefulness is a matter of words, attitudes, *and* actions."
  - How do you show gratefulness by your actions?
  - Whom do you know that maintains a grateful attitude?
- Have you ever created a list of thanksgiving?
  - Is this a challenging exercise for you?
  - How did it impact you?
- For what or whom are you most thankful?
- When have you received a memorable thank you?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 17. Generosity

- “What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.” – Albert Pike
- Hallam states that in our society, “we think about giving to others in terms of what it will take from us.”
  - How have you found this to be true or untrue?
- In what ways do you find yourself erring on the side of “saving for a rainy day” vs. giving to those in immediate need?
- What are some examples of non-monetary generosity?
- Describe a time when someone was generous to you.
- Other reflections on the chapter?

## 18. Legacy

- How often do you think of your own legacy?
- What would you hope appeared in your obituary?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

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References for material:

- [\*Human Gifts: Giving to Transform Ourselves, Others and the World\*](#)

*Italics* imply important points or example answers the leader can convey