

# Toxic Charity

## Chapters 1 & 2

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, as we start this new book, may it nourish our inclination to be charitable, and to always do so with your interests in mind. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

- **Ice Breaker**

- What is an example of charity that you feel was really effective?

- **Bible** (assign each verse to a different volunteer and have them read one after the other)

- **Acts 20:35; Matthew 5:42; Matthew 25:35; Luke 12:33; Luke 18:22; 1 John 3:17**

- **Video** [8:50-22:45; stop the video at "...We've got to find a better way of serving."]

- What are your impressions of Robert Lupton?
- Is there a gender difference when it comes to pride (e.g., the fathers leaving when presents were opened)
- Do you have a feeling of superiority when you give charitably?
- Other reflections?

- **Chapter 1 – The Scandal**

- [1] Do you consider "helping others" as a big part of the American character?
  - What evidence do you have of this?
- [2] "outcomes are almost entirely unexamined"
  - What do you look for when evaluating charitable organizations to which you contribute?
- [3] Africa is far worse off than they were 50 years ago.
  - Have you heard this from other sources?
  - Is this completely true?
- Do you see church programs as more or less effective than government programs and secular programs?
- [4] We evaluate our charitable programs by the rewards \*we\* receive through service rather than the benefits received by the served.
  - In what ways do you agree or disagree?
- [6] Can you provide examples of our memory being short when recovery is long (i.e., Americans are much better at responding to urgent issues rather than ongoing problems)?
- *Smart investments are to countries willing to...*
  - *Help themselves*
  - *Stand up to corruption*
  - *Assume accountability for results from all investments*
- [8] What do you think of each of the elements of the *Oath for Compassionate Service*?

- **Chapter 2 – The Problem with Good Intentions**

- [12] Retell the story of the Honduran water pump breaking down year after year
- [13] When have you felt the "uneasiness" Upton describes that your helping might not be accomplishing what you had hoped? Conversely, when have you felt it \*is\*?

- [14] 2005: 1.6 million American church members on mission trips at \$2.4 billion
    - Where are we looking through the lens of what will benefit our team vs. what will benefit the served?
  - [18] What experience do you have with microloans?
  - [20] Problem of those churches abroad with church partners in the U.S. who don't pursue *loans* because their partners are just *giving* them the money.
    - Is it the fault of the beggars or the givers?
  - *The U.S. is guilty of providing the type of charity that we outlawed for ourselves in the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 introduced by Republicans as part of the "Contract with America" and signed into law by Clinton.*
  - [26] *Prison Fellowship example highlighting equal partnerships among the organizations around the world, with no grants or loans for start-up or ongoing operations. Provide prisoners with skills training, repayable microloans, and business mentoring.*
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- **Closing Prayer (ask a volunteer to offer this)**

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References for material:

- [\*Toxic Charity: How the Church Hurts Those They Help and How to Reverse It\*](#)
- [HarperOne Reading and Discussion Guide for \*Toxic Charity\*](#)

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

# Chapters 3 & 4

- **Opening Prayer**

*Dear Lord, inspire us to take the time to identify need in our world, and to meet that need with our resources in a way that furthers your Kingdom on earth. In your Son's name we pray. Amen.*

- **Video [22:46-34:06; stop the video at "...we will not do for others what they have the capacity to do for themselves."]**

- How does identifying the talents of people in need foster a more effective approach to charity?
- What do you think of Lupton's "Golden Rule for Helpers" (Never do for others what they can do for themselves)?
- Other reflections?

- **Chapter 3 – The Anatomy of Giving**

- [35] Haiti's condition being 25% poorer than before international aid began. Lupton identifies the big problem here as lack of accountability.
  1. What accountability is in place for the mission work being conducted by our church?
  2. What could/should we do differently to improve accountability?
- [38] Lupton describes an alternative to simple toy giveaways – a toy store
  1. What experience do you have with similar approaches?
- [40] Mercy and Justice – "in time mercy will collide with an ominous, opposing force. Injustice."
  1. What does Lupton mean here?
- [42] Lupton discusses the homeless, and panhandlers' use of guilt.
  1. Which of the three theologians Lupton cites do you tend toward in your response to such solicitation
    - "Yes, freely!"
    - "...only be a last resort"
    - "Absolutely not!"
  2. How do you differentiate the sincere from the con artists?
    - [48] *Due diligence – If you don't have time to invest in a trusting relationship, give your money to a ministry that does*
- Other reflections?

- **Chapter 4 – Needs vs. Relationships**

- [51] Food co-ops instead of food pantries
  1. [56] Food is a *chronic* poverty need, not a life-threatening crisis.
    - What are the differences between how you treat a chronic need vs. a crisis?
- [61] Trust is a bedrock. It must be in charitable relationships.
  1. Name a charitable organization with which you have a trusting relationship
- Other reflections?

- **Closing Prayer (ask a volunteer to offer this)**

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# Chapters 5 & 6

- **Opening Prayer**  
*Giving God, help me to develop ongoing relationships with others, and truly listen to their needs before acting to address them. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*
- **Bible** (have a volunteer read)
  - **Deuteronomy 15:7-11**
- **Video** [[51:19-1:05:02](#)]; stop the video at “...Amen? Amen.”]
  - How have you witnessed strong Christian faith from people in need?
  - What are your reactions to Lupton’s “Oath for Helpers”
    1. I will never do for others what they can do for themselves
    2. I will limit one-way giving to crises and seek always to find ways for legitimate exchange
    3. I will empower by hiring, lending, and investing, and offer gifts sparingly as incentives to reinforce achievements
    4. I will put the interests of the poor above my own (or organization) self-interest even when it means setting aside my own agenda
    5. I will listen carefully for spoken and unspoken needs (knowing that many clues may be hidden)
    6. Above all, to the best of my ability, I will do no harm.
  - Other reflections?
- **Chapter 5 – Beyond Us-Based Giving**
  - [74] Lupton describes a church’s claim that the real benefit to their “hands-on” approach to charitable service is in “the labor they provide” rather than financial support. Lupton says this “benefit” ends up costing their ministry money...
    1. Do you see any value in such endeavors?
  - [76] To have significant impact with measurable results, we must have focused and not diversified investment.
    1. Do you agree? Are we spreading our church outreach money/effort too thin?
    2. Is this also true at a personal level? Do you have a more focused or diversified approach to your charitable giving?
- **Chapter 6 – No Quick Fixes**
  - [85] “Top-down charity seldom works.” Charity should start at home.
    1. What is Lupton driving at here?
  - *Example of TAP (The Atlanta Project) to eliminate Atlanta’s deepest poverty, started by Jimmy Carter. It had good intentions – targeting school districts rather than neighborhoods. Ran out of gas when Carter’s presence tapered off. Suffered from lack of focus on community engagement.*
  - Other reflections?
- **Closing Prayer** (ask a volunteer to offer this)

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# Chapters 7-10

- **Opening Prayer**

*Loving Father, we so want to serve you by serving others. Give us the inspiration and wisdom we require to minister to those in need. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.*

- **Bible** (assign each verse to a different volunteer and have them read one after the other)

- **Matthew 25:35; Matthew 25:40; Isaiah 58:10; Luke 11:41; Acts 20:35; Matthew 6:2; Luke 12:48b; Proverbs 19:17; Matthew 19:21; 1 Corinthians 13:3**

- **Chapters 7-10**

- *Billy Graham: "God has given us two hands, one to receive with and the other to give with."*
- [105] Lupton asks four questions about our giving:
  1. Is it yielding good returns?
  2. Is it consistent with our passions?
  3. Does it reflect our values about relief vs. development?
  4. Is it invested on the cutting edge?
  - Which of these do you consider to be essential vs. desirable for your giving?
- [120] "the welfare system has fostered generations of dependency and has severely eroded the work ethic"
  - Do you agree? Why or why not?
- [129] Lupton returns to his witnessed impact of giving:
  1. Give once – appreciation
  2. Twice – anticipation
  3. Three times – expectation
  4. Four times – entitlement
  5. Five times – dependency
  - What are your reactions to this assessment?
- [136] How would you describe the concept of "Community Development" in your own words?
  - What focuses of Community Development do you consider to be critical?
    - Community
    - Assets
    - Front-burner issues
    - Investing
    - Leadership development
    - Pace
    - <others?>
- What personal experiences do you have that relate to the issue of *dignity* in the face of charity?
- [169] "Historically, churches have had vested interests in their surrounding communities. And members often lived within walking distance of the church (explaining small parking lots). Pastors lived in the parsonages attached to or near the churches, and the churches had vital roles in the life of their communities. As a society, when we became commuterized churchgoers, all that changed. Most churches have lost their community roots, with little connection to the geography surrounding their buildings."
  - In what ways do you see geography getting in the way of service in your local community?
- What next steps do you see as critical in your ministry and that of the church?

- Other reflections?
- **Closing Prayer (ask a volunteer to offer this)**

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