

# PARENTING

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# TIPS

## Teach Your Child the Charity Habit

By Chick Moorman and Thomas Haller

Charity and the spirit of giving were elevated to a new level following the Asian tsunami. After witnessing the horrific images of pain and suffering streaming steadily across their TV sets, more people than ever before have dipped deeper into their own pockets to offer needed relief to the survivors of this unprecedented tragedy.

Many parents have used the destruction delivered by the disaster as an opportunity to help children learn about charity and the importance of reaching out to others in their time of need. They have made generous family donations, often involving their children in picking out the charity, writing the check, and preparing and mailing the envelope. They have allowed their children to witness turning the pain and grief of unimaginable loss into a time of extending love and compassion to unknown people half way around the world.

Clearly the tsunami provided an opportune time to teach children about charity. But what if parents want lessons about charity to be more than a one time occurrence? What if they want the spirit of giving to be a way of life for their children? What if they want charity to become a habit?

To help your children acquire the habit of charity, consider implementing as a family the strategies which follow.

1.) Periodically go through your closets rooting out clothes you haven't worn in awhile, clothes to be given to the Salvation Army or Good Will for distribution to the needy. Encourage your children to do the same. Allow them to select which clothes or toys they wish to donate. The value of this activity is diminished greatly if you go through their closets for them without their presence. For maximum benefit, get your children involved in choosing the appropriate items. Take your children with you when you drop the items off at the charitable destination.

2.) Regularly engage in a service oriented project. Rake the leaves of an elderly couple. Bake cookies for a serviceman or servicewoman. Bake bread and deliver it to the homeless feeding station in your community.



For Justin, "charity begins at home" was a reality - not just a proverb

3.) Give blood. Take your children with you so they see you as a model for giving. Talk to them about why you choose to donate blood and what you hope it will accomplish by doing so.

4.) Set up birthday parties as a time for giving to others. At your child's first school age birthday party, ask guests to bring a gift of a book (new or used) to be donated to a local charity. Talk to you son about the books he has and about children who have no books. Explain that one way to celebrate a birthday would be to give to those who have less. Involve the birthday boy in the decision of whether not to give the books to a woman's shelter, a doctor's office, or some other appropriate organization. When you deliver the books with your son, record it on camera.

5.) At regular intervals, buy dog or cat food and take it to the humane society. Allow your children to spend some time with the recipients of the gift.

6.) Build food baskets around the holidays and give to a needy family suggested by your church or school. Involve your children is selecting canned goods, fruit and other treats to include. Decorate the gift package and deliver it together, as a family.

7.) Create a charity jar to be used by the family when allowances are distributed. Invite children to share some of their allowance with others through donating to the jar. As the jar fills decide as a family where to contribute the contents. You may choose to save a whale, buy gloves for needy children, or contribute to a cancer charity among others. Read about various charities on the internet and share this information with your children to help them make an informed decision.

8.) Do things for the elderly they have trouble doing for themselves. Pick up sticks in your neighbors yard after a big windstorm. Mow the grass for grandma. Wash grandpa's car. Clean their windows in the spring. Help them plant flowers.

9.) Get on a regular service schedule at your church or synagogue. Sign up for a time to mow the grass and trim the bushes. Take your turn ushering and allow your child to assist.

By implementing some of the ideas above or others like them, you will be teaching your children that charity is not reserved only for emergencies. You will be helping them appreciate that reaching out to others in need is a way of life, rather than a moment in time when a catastrophic disaster occurs. Remember, while you are giving to others, you are giving your children important messages about your beliefs concerning the spirit of giving.

**Source:** Chick Moorman and Thomas Haller are the authors of "The 10 Commitments: Parenting with Purpose," (available from amazon.com).  
Visit [www.chickmoorman.com](http://www.chickmoorman.com), [www.thomashaller.com](http://www.thomashaller.com).

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