

Creating Global Community Through Unconditional Giving

By Todd Silva, September 2008

(This article was adapted from a Sunday service message prepared for two Unity Churches in the Greater Houston area during the 11 Days Of Global Unity, between September 11th and 21st.)

You know, I've been giving a lot of thought to something lately – that there is an idea, a possibility, worldwide. And this possibility is for Global Community. We are so blessed to be a part of, and live in the time of the unfolding of this possibility. Now, there are many, many ways that each of us can contribute to and continue to build upon this idea of Global Community. And I think that one of the most powerful and fulfilling ways is through every day, unconditional giving.

So what exactly *IS* unconditional giving? OK, let's first consider its opposite, in the word, "conditional". When we do something conditionally – that is, with conditions placed upon it – we are doing it with an agenda. And most often, it's a hidden agenda. This is where the notion of "what's in it for me" lives. Consumerism is a close relative, too. Mind you, there is nothing wrong with buying things and consuming, but when we are too out of balance with it, and all we think about is how much we can get from someone or something, we have lost our way.

Alright, now let's look at "unconditional". What does it mean? Unconditional is when you do something just 'cause. And mostly just 'cause you know it's right. Your heart tells you so. When you do something unconditionally, you do it with no expectation of anything in return. You're not doing X in order to get Y. You're just doing X because it's right. There are no agendas.

So unconditional giving is giving without expecting anything in return. It is truly letting go in complete faith. It is trusting enough to give, no matter what is going on in the outside world, or whether conditions are good or bad.

When you think of unconditional giving, do any role models come to mind for you? It's helpful to have a role model in almost any endeavor, someone who can serve as a guide when you need one. And when I think of unconditional giving, one person comes to mind right away.

I'll bet most of you have heard of Mother Teresa, one of the most self-less and charitable givers to have ever lived. I learned that at the age of 12, she felt strongly the call of God. She just knew she had to become a missionary to spread the love of Christ. So at the age of 18, she left her parental home and joined a community of nuns with missions in India. Mother Teresa taught at St. Mary's High School in Calcutta, but the suffering and poverty she glimpsed *outside* the convent walls made such a deep impression on her that she asked for and received permission to leave the convent school and devote herself to working among the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta – she listened to her calling. Although she had no funds, she depended upon Divine Providence, and started an open-air school for slum children. She was soon joined by many volunteers, and financial support started flowing in. She eventually received permission from the Holy See to start her own order, "The Missionaries of Charity", whose primary task was to love and care for those persons that nobody else wanted to look after.

Mother Teresa left an incredible legacy – her Missionaries have spread all over the world – providing effective help to the downtrodden in many third world countries, including relief work in the wake of

natural disasters. They also take care of the shut-ins, alcoholics, homeless, and AIDS sufferers in many developed countries like the United States and Canada, and across Europe.

What fueled her so? No doubt her passion did. But, moreover, she wanted to know how she could serve the Greater Good. Mother Teresa, as an unconditional and tireless giver, was creating Global Community throughout her entire life by serving, by giving from the very essence of her being! She is an amazing model to me of what it means to truly give unconditionally.

I'm thinking now of some other role models... Right here in this church that is very lucky to have so many loving volunteers! You all are really the heartbeat you know. Sometimes you don't get publicly recognized for your acts of service, for your give aways. And I'm pretty sure that most of the time you don't get paid for it. Yet you give unconditionally, from your heart. You make a positive difference, every day. In a simple yet profound way, you help to build Global Community by contributing to it right here, every day.

A good friend shared something with me that was very wise – he said, "Give to whomever, or whatever, inspires you". You are doing just that. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your give away.



Just this past weekend, Galveston, the Bolivar Peninsula, and the Greater Houston area were hit by Hurricane Ike. Although Ike was only a Category 2 storm, it was massive in size, and so its effects were felt far and wide. Our deepest prayers go out to those families who have lost their homes and precious memories.

But what I learned more than anything else came from my family's experience of living without electricity for three days. Because of this, we went outside to visit with our neighbors. We met several who lived just a few doors down that we didn't even know. We took the time to look after each other and see who needed help along the way. Yes, we "missed" not having a TV, the internet, and e-mail. But I soon began to realize what a blessing it was to be without these "distractions" we so often take for granted.

I seem to remember that this was how life was back in my childhood. People would spend time with each other. We'd play, and hang out, and chat outside. We did the same this past weekend. And we were giving to each other, unconditionally. Although it wasn't that obvious to me at the time, I now know that we were building Global Community right there in our own neighborhood like I had never witnessed before!

Unconditional giving is now especially close to my heart because of a very personal experience I was blessed with a little over a year ago. In a prayer, I received an inspiration to begin to give away a dollar, every day. You see, I had become way too out of balance in my life by focusing too much on, and worrying too much about, and being too consumed with getting all of the time. Spirit answered my prayer by guiding me to begin to give away unconditionally, and anonymously, every day. This is what has brought about my awareness of unconditional giving. This is what began the healing process for me, transforming from the mindset of "what's in it for me", to "how can I give".



Now, by far the greatest model that I can think of for giving is God, who gives to us, unconditionally, every moment of every day. My absolute favorite time of day is in the early morning, just before the sun comes up, when it is going from darkness to light. I meditate during this time in our healing room at home. Few things bring me more joy and peace than when I hear that first bird sing its song at daybreak. Soon, another one joins in. And then the chorus begins. These are the gifts from God. These inspire me to want to give back to God, to this beautiful planet, and to you, and you, and you...

There are many, many ways to give, and many things that we can give. One of the most healing is the gift of thanks. Sometimes my prayers are simply prayers of thanking the Divine... Most of the times when I give away a dollar now, I silently say, "Thank you God"... And my wife starting something in our family several years ago that is now a wonderful ritual for us – when we sit down for dinner, we each say a blessing of gratitude, and what we are grateful for in the moment.

So whether we are just giving thanks, or giving our time, or our talent, or our treasure to someone or something else, when we are doing it unconditionally, we are making possible, and helping to grow, Global Community. Lately, I have begun to imagine a world where everyone is giving to each other, all from our hearts, unconditionally. Will you imagine this with me?



I'd like to close with a wonderful story about giving, a very personal story – I was fortunate to play music for the kids at Texas Children's Hospital during the holidays. During one of my visits there, I was sitting in a play room with a bunch of youngsters, all cancer patients, and began to play the song, "Never Stop Believing". A little boy – I'm guessing about 5 years of age – came over and rested his arms and his chin on my knee as I played. Looking back now, and reminiscing, I don't know how I was able to finish that song without breaking down into tears. I thought that I was there to give to and to make a difference in the life of this terminally ill little guy, but I never expected to be so moved by the lasting impression he made in mine. It didn't matter whether this child knew in his mind how much he was giving to me unconditionally – it was just flowing naturally from his heart.

God, you so selflessly give to us in every moment – and so it is up to us to decide what to do with each moment. Yes, sometimes we need to take care of our own affairs, and cross an item off of our own to-do list. But there are many other times when we know it's the right thing to just unconditionally give to someone or something else who we love and that inspires us.

We can strengthen Global Community through heartfelt, unconditional, every day giving. We can do this together – The world is waiting! Your heart is waiting!

God bless you,

Todd Silva

Todd Silva's blog at <http://toddsilva.com> and website at <http://giveawayadollaraday.com> are all about gently guiding life back into balance through simple and joyous acts of every day, unconditional giving. A nationally recognized speaker and musician, Todd is available to speak and perform at your event, service, or function, please call 713-849-3535 for more information.