

In the land of Aesop's Fables there once was a greedy young boy. He wanted some nuts out of a large jar, so he reached his hand in and grabbed a large handful. He tried to get his hand out but he was stuck. His greed and unwillingness to give something up got him caught in a most unpleasant situation. Selfishness has a way of doing that. But sharing, one of the most highly valued traits to the Rotary International organization brings benefits to you and the one you share with. Unfortunately, being selfless is not an easy lesson to learn, but its rarity makes it all the more valuable, since sharing generously is one of the most important character traits we can develop. We must all overcome our selfish instincts to truly share with those in need- not just giving away what we have to spare, what we don't need ourselves. Sharing means giving of ourselves, selflessly, for the good of others. This not only includes toys or spare change- but time, efforts, and talents as well. Today we will examine sharing in the light of four crucial questions developed by the Rotary Organization in 1943. These questions are guidelines for behavior to ensure that the right choice is being made. So, in following the Rotary's decision-making example we will try to find out- is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships, and is it beneficial to all concerned? And as we look at the answers to these questions, we will see how undoubtedly crucial selfless sharing is to our society and to ourselves.

In Chinese folklore there is a story about an old Taoist master and his pupils. The students were to meet the master by the river for their final test. When they were heading to the river they saw a woman sobbing by a well. The students knew they should help the lady but did not have time because they were going to be late. So the students ignored the lady, except one. One student knew he did not have the time, but put the lady before himself. He rescued her son out of the well. And lo and behold the "boy" was the Taoist master. That student was the only one who passed the test because he had truly shared. This story serves to illustrate the importance of

truly sharing- that is giving of your self selflessly even if it is something you'd rather keep to yourself. That is why when it comes to sharing we must ask ourselves- is what we are doing the truth. Are we truly sharing? Are we giving what we don't need just because we feel bad, or are we giving our best out of our hearts. The Tao student demonstrates true sharing. He gave his time even though it was precious to him. He put someone before himself and this is true sharing. When we share, we must examine ourselves to be sure that our attitude is selfless- only then will our sharing truly be sharing from the heart.

The next crucial question to be asked about sharing is, is this character trait fair to all concerned? The answer to this question is also yes. When we are lucky enough to have material goods and intangible assets like time and opportunity, it is only fair that we pass these blessings along. It is only fair when we stop hoarding and start sharing. This fairness can be seen in the extraordinary life of Paul Rusesabagina who inspired the movie "Hotel Rwanda." During the horrible genocide in Rwanda, Rusesabagina was lucky enough to be a manager of a hotel. This gave him more leverage and a better place of refuge than anyone else had. So, Rusesabagina shared his opportunities selflessly. He opened up the hotel to many refugees and saved over 1,000 civilians. By sharing his blessings he made the world a little more fair by giving others a chance to survive as well. This story shows that sharing makes things a little fairer. When those with much give to those with little, fairness is spread.

Along with fairness, we must also ask ourselves if sharing spreads goodwill and friendships. To answer this question we will look at the Rotary organization itself. President elect Wilfred J. Wilkinson said that everything the Rotary International group does involves sharing. And as they share with fellow Rotarians and the world, goodwill and friendships can be seen. First of all, by sharing with former club members or their widows or widowers, they strengthen their relationships and create a sense of community among Rotarians. They also reach out to their communities and the world. Through what is known as the SHARE system, they give scholarships and give grants to humanitarian projects among other things. These donations spread

goodwill through the city and the globe. But it also builds friendships between volunteering organizations. Wilkinson stressed that the Rotary works along with other organizations; this provides the perfect atmosphere for goodwill to blossom.

It has been that you can't please all of the people all of the times, but how close does sharing get to this goal? Is it beneficial to all parties concerned? Well, sharing might be the only thing on this planet that pleases both parties at the same time. Does this sound impossible? Well just consider for a moment the classic A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. In this story an old miser Scrooge learns the importance of generosity after being visited by 3 ghosts. In the end he gives away a goose to the Cratchits, the family of one of the worker's he mistreats, and money to the community. And at the end both the givers and receivers are happy. The Cratchits and other families benefit from his generosity. And Scrooge benefits because giving opens up his heart and makes him a happier person. Sharing changes the bitter miser into a loving and zealously generous man. Hopefully, we can learn to share without being dragged around by three ghosts. And if we are able to, we can help others while helping ourselves. Sharing benefits all parties. As Davis Assael said "Sometimes its hard to avoid the happiness of others." If you bring joy to others by sharing whatever you have, this joy will rub off on you.

Like the selfish boy, we are not born giving selflessly to those around us. In fact it is quite the opposite, no one has to teach a toddler the word "mine". But by overcoming the selfishness we are born with we can learn to share of both our tangible and intangible assets. To examine the importance of sharing we asked ourselves- is sharing the truth? Is it fair? Does it build goodwill and friendships? And does it benefit everyone concerned? As is obvious, the answer to all of these questions is yes. And since it is the right thing to do, we must act on our knowledge. Knowing that sharing is an important aspect of character is not enough to help the world. We must take action to share, and then and only then will we be in a position to benefit our world like never before.