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## Depth Perception

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### Becoming even more charitable

In this era of debating the worth of a charitable tax benefit, let us not lose sight of the real issue. The real issue is not whether there is a charitable tax benefit. The real issue is also not whether having such a benefit promotes charitableness. The issue is whether people are charitable. And charitableness is charitable whether there is a tax benefit or not. In fact, charitableness is already looking for ways to continue and increase generosity whether or not the tax benefit goes away and whether or not there are increased taxes.

How does this work? I began listing ways while attending a pancake breakfast for a local and much loved pre-school that serves several rural communities. Here is just a partial list:

- \* **A commitment to live within my means** so that I can choose what I will give, just as I can choose what I will save and spend. Sure my family and I must practice self-denial, and delayed gratification—a good habit to develop. My enterprise and the organizations for which I volunteer also benefit from this.
- \* **A commitment to be a welcoming person.** By not filling every waking moment with activity, I am able to flex and be in the moment with people. My days don't have to be ruined because I got an unexpected phone call or someone dropped by the office to chat. In those intersections I can offer hospitality: a cup of coffee, a piece of pie, a tour of the place, making an introduction, loaning a book, offering a ride to the store, sitting down for conversation on someone's front stoop.
- \* **Forming my estate plan and keeping it up to date and available** so that my spouse and children don't have to wait for the courts to decide what to do with any remaining money and possessions after I die. This is not just being generous to my family. Neither is it making sure that no one beyond my family gets their grubby mitts into the till. Having an up to date plan lets me continue giving as my life ends, naming the charities I would like to receive something. I've given to them throughout my lifetime and now I can do something that extends beyond even that by simply preparing a few documents.
- \* And then there is that pre-school pancake breakfast. Rather than in eat in restaurants that bears profit for the owner, **I can take more meals at the many benefit events that are in my community:** pancake breakfasts, BBQ chicken dinners, fish fries or boils, brat fries (but not too many of these or my estate plan will go into effect prematurely from the high cholesterol), and chili suppers.

Someone is likely to object here, pointing out that nothing is wrong in eating at a restaurant and helping businesses small and large succeed. There is no argument here. Rather, it points to yet one more way a person can be charitable. **Being a pleasant diner and a generous tipper**—even if you feel the service is poor and the food far from the best—has a way of coming around and being a blessing to the generous-hearted person.

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