

Wynne Leon (00:02)

Welcome to How to Share, a podcast that takes a deep dive into collaboration.

I'm Wynne Leon and I'm with Sharon Eubank, the Global Director of Humanitarian Services for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are talking about her book, *Doing Small Things with Great Love*. It is such a helpful and hopeful book that provides a blueprint for effective service. Sharon shares a few of the 92 stories in her amazing book that she provides as illustrations of the 12 principles

for effective and lasting service. Based in her years of experience working in communities near and far, Sharon has distilled some thoughtful truths that inspire us to action. We talk about how sometimes we don't feel we can make a difference as individuals and why sometimes it seems easier to contribute to a project far away than the ones in our own cities and town. Sharon gives some great examples.

of why local solutions or local problems are more effective. We talk about how service and volunteering can make such a difference in our own lives. Sharon not only provides a blueprint for effective and lasting service, she also provides some suggestions to get us started doing small things with great love. This is an incredible episode that gets to the very heart and soul of collaboration.

how we can be useful to one another. I know you'll love it.

you

Hey Sharon! I'm so glad to be able to talk with you.

Sharon Eubank (02:05)

How are you, Wynne

Very nice to have you on the show.

Wynne Leon (02:12)

I absolutely loved reading your book, *Doing Small Things with Great Love*. It's hopeful and it's helpful.

Sharon Eubank (02:20)

Well, thank you. The whole idea was that it would be practical.

Wynne Leon (02:23)

Well, and it is that, but it's also inspiring. I mean, I think that's that combination that's such magic. So you are the global director of humanitarian services for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now. But of course, that's not where you started. Can you tell us the story of how working as an English teacher abroad and also as a staff assistant in the US Senate helped prepare you for what you do today?

Sharon Eubank (02:53)

like a lot of people, I did not study the thing that I am now doing. I thought I would be an English teacher. And so the first job that I took out of university was teaching English as a second language in Japan. And I had a lot of different classes. Most of my students were being transferred. They worked for Honda and they were being transferred, you know, to a different assignment where they would use English. But I had this class of junior high students, these seven girls, and I would ask them,

I, you know, we're just doing very basic things. They'd say, what's your favorite color? We're going to go around. What's your favorite color? And they surprised me because they would all form a little group and they would jointly decide on what the group's favorite color was. And then they would say, our favorite color is blue. I get, know, I say, no, no, no, that's not what we're doing. I want you, Sachiko, to tell me your exact favorite color. And they could not grasp why one person would elevate their choice over the groups.

And I finally realized after going through this and me insisting, they're trying to teach me something really powerful about how groups consult and what it is to be a member of a group and how you can promote that unity. Being from America, that was a brand new concept for me. So was really interesting. I learned a lot from that little assignment.

Wynne Leon (04:03)

You're right. And such a power. I mean, you could see that lesson from early on how it threads through some of your other practices that you list out in this book.

Sharon Eubank (04:16)

mentioned, you mentioned that I would work in the United States Senate. And I'm trying to pull that idea through to the to government work that I did. I worked for a senator who was from Wyoming. His name was Alan Simpson. And when he was a young boy, he attended a scout camp. And they had Japanese citizens interred, they had been moved from the coast of California into Wyoming. And some of those Japanese kids were also in the scout group. And he would go to that was a very

dramatic, unpleasant thing for those Japanese citizens that were being moved during World War II. But he made a friend there, a guy named Norm, and they stayed friends their whole lives. Well, Norm Mineta became a congressman from California, and those two were in the Senate. They were from different parties. They didn't agree, but they were bonded over their shared scouting. And so they had lunch all the time, and they always came out on different sides of issues, but they were really close, and they didn't allow

disagreements to affect their relationships. And I think that's another key about what we tried to talk about in the book.

Wynne Leon (05:16)

And that reminds me of a quote from the book that I love, is, self-righteous anger feels emotionally satisfying, but building bridges of understanding and compromise, plank by plank, across a partisan divide lasts a lot longer if you're trying to do something meaningful. And you've just illustrated that so well.

so you touch on so many things that keep us feeling like we can't make a difference. Like I feel too small. Or when talking about working locally, our understanding of the barriers and dynamics that play that makes it harder. Or, or even feeling like there's not enough money to solve the problem. Can you say more about how to overcome those hurdles?

Sharon Eubank (06:06)

You know, in a global organization like mine, we're working with governments and big global organizations and UN and faith-based groups and we're trying to do things at scale. But I'm so impressed by how much gets done because it starts by one person, one person who has an idea or they have some energy to bring to something and they just refuse to be stopped. They don't have money and they don't have connections, but it's that energy, that passion that they're bringing to it.

We often think we have to have access to a lot of money or we have to have access to a lot of time. I can't do this because I don't have any money or I don't have time to do this. I'll do this later when I have more time. But I'm impressed by people. And I talk about some of the examples in the book. There was a woman who lived in my state whose husband died in an industrial accident. has three little kids. She didn't have her education. She had put her husband through school and now she's just devastated. They have the funeral and know, nobody, all the support kind of

waves away after the end of that funeral. But she had a neighbor who was probably in her 50s and she came over to her and said, look, I don't have any money, but I have time and I can see you're going to need somebody to help you. What if I come and I'll help get the kids ready for school? I'll make a meal for the evening. I'll pick up kids from school and get their homework done. You go to school and get your education and let me do this with you and I'll be your partner in this. It wasn't just the time that she spent for that. She did it for two years.

I just love that she would do that for two years. And it wasn't, I mean, she was providing childcare and child help, but she was sort of that mentor, somebody who listens as they processed losing their father and their husband. What she did for that little family, it wasn't at scale and it didn't cost any money. It took a lot of her time, but she affected somebody really deeply. And I think you have to decide, am I gonna do a superficial thing across a lot of things?

Or am gonna do something really deep that may just affect a few people? And I think most of what happens in the world that starts big things started with, I'm gonna do a really important thing for a few people and see what goes.

Wynne Leon (08:18)

It reminds me of a principle from our mutual friend Sam Daley Harris, which is be unreasonable. You get that bug and you just start. So to hear that echoed in what you say about it starts with one person being really passionate about something is so good.

Sharon Eubank (08:40)

Sorry, was just gonna say, we're really drawn to people who have energy. Sam Daley Harris is a really good example. When he cares about something, he makes you care about it. And I think more than the money or the time, it's that personal energy that helps.

Wynne Leon (08:54)

Mm-hmm. That passion and that enthusiasm. Yeah. That reminds me of my father. And when I spoke at his funeral, I had looked up enthusiasm, which means with God, en Theos right? And I thought, that is because that it described my dad perfectly. And it was perfect for the way he lived his life. And boy, doesn't that catch on.

Sharon Eubank (09:21)

So true.

Wynne Leon (09:22)

So true. So there's so many great examples for what you've seen work and not work in your book. And they're captured in your principles. Two that really struck me are finding local solutions for local problems. my solution to your problem will always be wrong. Can you tell the story of the solar power for the clean water system that needed to be repaired after the hail storm?

Sharon Eubank (09:50)

My organization does a lot of water projects and we made a decision on a project we working on in Kenya. You know what, instead of a gasoline power generator, they're noisy, they take a lot of gasoline, let's use an emerging technology in solar panels and that will provide the energy for the pump. It's a sunny place and it'll be a great, easy thing to do, which we did. We were very proud of this and we had a big fair and we inaugurated the pump and we showed everybody how it worked and the newspapers were there. But two weeks later, a big

hailstorm comes along there and the hail broke out the solar panels on top of the pump. So the water committee guy in Kenya, he does what we asked him to do. He calls us up and he says, we need to make a repair. What do we need to do for these solar panels? And we said, ~ those came from Germany and it will take months to order the new pieces. Then they have to be shipped into Kenya and they have to get through customs. And you could just feel his deflation. That community had water for two weeks. And then this,

great idea that we had, they're back to going to fetch water out of the river again. And I learned from that experience and a host of others, even if it isn't the latest technology, if it isn't the ideal solution, the better choice is to do something that's local because they can repair it, because it works locally and it has local parts. And as hard of a lesson as that is to learn, it has come back to teach me over and over again, because I haven't learned that lesson the first time.

Wynne Leon (11:16)

Right, Well, we all are, I mean, clean water, it's such an incredible goal. And we're all enamored sometimes with new technology. I mean, it makes so much sense why that situation or how that situation came to play. but the reality of it sometimes.

Sharon Eubank (11:34)

You said that little principle in there that says, solution to your problem will always be wrong. And we came into that community with a solution that we had kind of predetermined and we sort of put it on them. That quote comes from my colleague, his name was Patrick Reese. And when I was first the director, this was in 2011, I was pretty green. I just didn't know what I was doing. And he was kind of the second in command. He'd worked for 37 years. He knew exactly what he was doing.

And he could have very easily been so annoyed that he had to play second fiddle to this woman who come in. But he would sit in my office every morning and he would say, what do think we ought to do? What about this? What's your idea? And I would say, Patrick, tell me what to do. And he would say, my solution to your problem will always be wrong. And he taught me so many things. Have confidence in yourself. Let's do what you think is right. Let's learn those lessons. And he was providing a local solution because I was the local person.

I really loved learning that from Patrick.

Wynne Leon (12:30)

Well, and in your book, you have so many great examples of people who are wonderful mentors. And I'm thinking of Lloyd who, you know, wow, touching, touching example as a boss.

Sharon Eubank (12:43)

Lloyd had a, he was a type A personality. I write a book. He could never go on vacation with his family because he couldn't stand sitting on a beach. You know, he was just itching to get onto his computer again and do things. And when he, at the end of his life, when he contracted pancreatic cancer, he invited me to come down to his house and I arrived and he said, I'm going to tell you the thing that I wish that I'd known early in my life. He said, you're like me, you're type A. I know I've worked with you. And he had written on a piece of paper,

this thing, said, I want you to tell me what you know about multiply and replenish. And I'm like, Lloyd, it comes from Genesis, know, I know multiply and replenish the earth. And he said, you think it's about having children? He said, but it's not. He said, it's about multiplying your energy. And then it's about replenishing that energy so you can do it again. And there's nothing wrong with that cycle of replenishment. It's a commandment. And then he got tears in his eyes. He said, I didn't live by this. I burned the candle at both ends.

and I regret it. And I'm telling you the one thing that I wish I could do differently in my life, that I would have replenished more. I loved learning that from him because we feel guilty. We feel like we're taking a break. We're slacking off. There's all these people who need us. And yet it's part of that cycle of we have to replenish and it is a commitment.

Wynne Leon (14:03)

Yeah, reminds me of Dr. Scott Peck, who at one point said, I think it was an interview with Oprah. It's one that stuck with me for all these years. But somebody, he said, you know, people ask why I can get so much done. And he says, it's because I spend two hours a day doing nothing.

Sharon Eubank (14:21)

I love that.

Wynne Leon (14:22)

And he said, I used to call it my thinking time, but people felt free to interrupt me. So I started calling it my praying time. he really emphasized that need to replenish, as you just said, and Lloyd just said.

Sharon Eubank (14:41)

There's a lot of spiritual practices. I'm glad that he called it his praying time because meditation, you know, even in the New Testament, you'll read Jesus going out in the wilderness to just commune and be alone. And we in our modern life, we don't have enough opportunity. Right.

Wynne Leon (14:54)

There's

so much to command our attention and call us to the work. One of the other points that really hit home for me reading your book is that volunteering and being of service is a change agent for the person doing the work. Whether it's moving past self-interest towards the understanding of humanity as one big web or turning down the polarization of this world.

or because it just improves our lives. And I'm going to quote from you here. You write, volunteer in so many inconvenient settings and even hope to foster a social movement of volunteerism because it spins off friendships, enhances the meaning of our lives, and creates a climate for many kinds of believers to thrive together side by side. Can you say more about how you've seen that work?

Sharon Eubank (15:49)

For me, in my 28 years of doing this kind of work, the hygiene kits, the wells, the blankets, the camps, all those things are the excuse for this other thing happening. think it's many kinds of people with different beliefs, with different politics, with different experiences, somehow figuring out, like my little Japanese class, what we can do to thrive together side by side. And the only way that we can practice that is by engaging with each other in

in community service. So just a couple of weeks ago, I was down at St. Vincent de Paul in my own city where the Catholic Church provides a daily lunch for people. So I just signed up and I went in there and I'm sitting next to a couple of business people, a couple of people from the shelter, very, very different from me. And we're all, you know, we're shredding lettuce, we're frying up meat for the lunch and we just are chatting. We're chatting about our lives and our families and different things.

But the most powerful thing was there was a junior chef in there was making cookies for dessert and he'd been in a work program. He'd been incarcerated. He'd been accepted into this and he was getting his chef certificate so that he could go out. And in the middle of our preparation, he came in and he said, I got the job. And all of these people, know, they're preparing lunch were all so different, couldn't be happier just cheering and clapping him on the back, this formerly incarcerated person. And we were all bonded over that thing.

We need more of that in this world. We need different people from different aspects to bond over, you know, this guy who did a job. And the only way that we can figure out how to do that is by these community interactions and service. I think volunteerism is the key to some of that.

Wynne Leon (17:31)

Yeah, I have a gas station sign that's near me. Sometimes, you know, witty, sometimes wise. you know, it said something along the lines of, know, if you're feeling bad, it's because you're spending too much time consuming. We were meant to create. And you're talking about that cycle of getting out of consuming the news, you know, consuming.

TV or whatever else has been made for us and getting out to create moments. If I can recap that.

Sharon Eubank (18:06)

I'd love to see that sign.

Wynne Leon (18:07)

Yeah, it was a good one.

Sharon Eubank (18:11)

There's, you know, service is one of these things, but before we ever had screens, we invented things that created this thing. Sports is one of them. think music is another one. There's just different things that we do because they're fun to do. And it's part of us bonding with each other and creating bridges where no bridges existed before. And I think we could explore that.

Wynne Leon (18:30)

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Creating bridges, I love that. Well, in your book, Doing Small Things with Great Love is a blueprint for effective, ethical, and lasting service. You provide not only the principles, but also some suggestions on how to get started. I think that circling back to what you said is this is a practical book. And I'd say practical, but inspiring.

One of the things that I loved about that list is that there's many I can do with my young kids right now. Like number 39, grow something from a seed. And I love that call to gather together with our stories to better see the impact of small acts. And you provide some hashtags like hashtag small things, great love, or small acts, big impact. Tell us

what the lasting impact you hope your book will be for this world.

Sharon Eubank (19:22)

That's such a good question. I wrote the book mostly because people ask me all the time, what can I do to help? You know, they have a desire, they want to do something. But I hope that when they read the book, they then ask the question, you know, how can I help people in a way they want to be helped? Or how can my helping help them help themselves? Or, you know, what about when we can't help? know, those kinds of nuanced questions are harder to answer. But I think they're

They're also the most satisfying to do that in the book. And then I'm not an expert. I have certain experiences, but I would love for people to post their stories because it's in the storytelling that's so rich. And maybe a hashtag is an awkward way of doing that, but anyway that your listeners want to tell their stories about what's been meaningful and impactful to them, that's what this community is about.

Wynne Leon (20:13)

Right. And just creating a feed of something that that feeds us with inspiration, with creation. I think it's a brilliant idea. I'm so excited for your book to hit the shelves and to to start what I think could be a great moment of doing small things with great love.

Sharon Eubank (20:33)

Well, thank you. You promote good ideas and good people. It makes me happy to be included in that. ~

Wynne Leon (20:38)

well, I'm so excited to be able to talk to you and to promote just this wonderful, let's call it a movement of participation and service. So thank you, Sharon. Bye.

Sharon Eubank (20:52)

Thank you so much, bye bye.

Wynne Leon (21:00)

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