

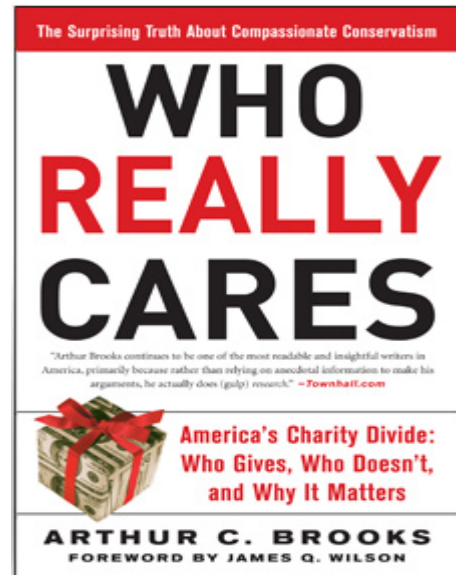
Review of *Who Really Cares* by Arthur Brooks

Who Really Cares is an interesting look into the habits of charitable givers. The author is a professor at Syracuse University. His political leanings had always been liberal so he was surprised by some of the findings of his research.

Brooks found that four forces are responsible for making people charitable:

1. **Religion**
2. **Skepticism about the government in economic life**
3. **Strong families**
4. **Personal entrepreneurship**

Brooks concluded to his surprise that charitable giving and a religious conservative lifestyle go hand in hand.



He gives this example early in the book. Imagine two people. One attends church every week and strongly rejects the idea that government is responsible to redistribute wealth. The other never attends a house of worship and strongly believes that government should take action to reduce inequality. The statistics tell us that the first person is going to give away 100 times more money than the second person.

Brooks' research also concluded that the United States is far more charitable than Europe. This is because Europeans are taxed a lot more and the government takes care of charitable issues, right? Wrong— says Brooks. The average British family pays 10.8% of household income in taxes which is less than the average American family— 11.3%. Higher taxes in Europe have led to a black market that is double the size of the United States according to the *Wall Street Journal Europe*.

Americans give far more than Europeans because they are: more religious, less dependent on government and have more stable families. Admittedly, this is one of Brooks' findings that surprised me the most. Families with children are much more likely to be charitable than singles or married couples with no kids. It is surprising because I know first-hand how expensive it is to raise children.

I was somewhat surprised by Brooks' conclusion that political conservatism leads to much greater charitable giving than liberalism. The stereotype we grow up with is that conservatives are "cold-hearted" and liberals are "bleeding hearts." According to Brooks, it is just the opposite. You can see verification of this if you look at the tax returns of some of the top political figures:

These are the percentages of income given to charity by some key conservative figures versus key liberals:

Conservatives:

Bush— 2006: 12% of Adjusted Gross Income given to charity (\$643k income)
Cheney— 2005: 78% of AGI given to charity (\$8.8 million income)

Liberals:

Gore— 1997: 0.2% of AGI given to charity (\$198k income)
Hilary Clinton— 2006: 10% of AGI given to charity (\$15.9 million income)
Barack Obama— 2006: 6% of AGI given to charity (\$983k income)

McCain had not released his tax returns yet. What is interesting to note is that Obama's charitable giving increased substantially in 2006 when he declared he was running for President. Obama gave 1% of income to charity prior to 2006. Clinton has consistently averaged in the 5-10% range on much higher income than Obama.

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