

# Love and Caring

## [Paper No. 8 of the *Nehemiah Papers*]

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*Note to Readers: Love is the fifth “realm of power,” and in earlier Papers I used the word “service” for both the expression and currency of Love. Now I have changed the “expression” from service to “caring.” The word “service” is still the correct term for the “currency” of love and caring. This wording change will eventually be made in Papers No. 1 and No. 3.*

Love is a strange concept to be called the fifth realm of power. One dictionary definition calls it “intense affection.” Its expression is something like “beneficent caring.” But what is beneficent to one might be an anathema to someone else. Either way, love is an extremely powerful force. In a popular novel, Lord Voldemort forgot that a mother’s love for her son, Harry Potter, was a powerful form of old magic. In a different form, love for a country can motivate a soldier to do heroic deeds on the battlefield, some so remarkable as to merit posthumous receipt of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Yet, in its complexity, love of one’s religion can motivate a suicide bomber. Do not underestimate the power of love.

The “currency” of love is “service,” the quantifiable and observable acts that people do for the benefit of others. Service for the benefit of others is among the most charitable forms of love. America needs love, and America needs service. America tends to underscore its focus on acts of kindness around “special holidays” such as Thanksgiving and Christmas when such stories frequently are promoted in the media as “feel good” events. Service, whether holiday-inspired or year-round, is wonderful for the personal and national psyche. But is there enough of it? Can there ever be too much service? Can love, caring, and service be part of the way for America to regain and maintain its position in World leadership? Can service be a sign of weakness or arrogance? We will discuss the possible roles of love, caring and service in relation to America’s attempts to delay the absolute truth of the decline of all previous prosperous and powerful nations.

In comparison with many other nations, America is already a leader in volunteer service. Our students are often encouraged to volunteer to help in whatever ways they are best able. Service has become an item for applications to universities and on employment resumes. Employers frequently look for prior service as an indication of a well-rounded person who is not self-centered. Churches, clubs, and informal groups provide thousands of hours of unpaid service for the well-being of others.

The above paragraph is a “feel good” statement. I have no complaints about it, but I do offer some observations and suggestions in the light of avoiding a decline in America.

1. America would benefit from a massive increase in levels of caring and service.
2. Many more Americans need to be involved in that increase in caring and service.
3. We must analyze and adjust where and to whom caring and service are best directed.

## **How Service can help**

Progress implies accomplishing something favorable, often in materialistic or social terms. We often measure progress in monetary terms such as increased gross domestic product, rising stock market values, increased net worth of an individual or corporation, buying a new car or larger home, *etc.* On the social side, we check on improvement of test scores in schools, indices of health, and lower crime rates. Those social examples are generally associated with the effects of labor, such as in law enforcement, medical care, teaching/education, management, sales, or good investment efforts. Paid or unpaid, that work is a form of service. Thus we start to observe that both money and social service can be used to measure the status of a person or nation.

For a moment, imagine how an unpaid volunteer could accomplish those social improvements. Okay, assume that the volunteer actually has some relevant credentials or supervised training to do the job either paid or un-paid. Volunteer tutoring of children in schools or in evenings requires some education, but not a university degree and teacher's certificate. Volunteer neighborhood watch, especially in a troubled neighborhood, adds eyes and ears to our police force. People doing something good for others can contribute to our national well-being.

## **Obligatory National Service**

Nationally organized service to the nation is already an established practice in America and many other nations. Most widely practiced is military service. America today has only a voluntary military service that is based on attractive payments and incentives for enlistment in the armed forces, including the National Guard. The call of patriotism is clearly an incentive for enlistment, especially in times of war. In previous wars, compulsory military service was standard practice and acceptable to the American public and their elected representatives.

Apart from middle-aged individuals who chose a career in the military, national service has been almost exclusively for young adults ages 18 through 30 years old. The Peace Corps and the AmeriCorps are non-military examples of excellent service opportunities already in operation. The amount of good that could be accomplished by millions of additional service-days could have a very beneficial impact on America and the rest of the World.

Most Americans have never done any national service. For America to avoid the impending decline, I propose that ALL adult Americans be required to serve this nation. Yes, I am referring to both men and women, and to all adult age brackets. Such service could be in many forms. Here are a few notes:

1. Every adult American from 16 to 75 years of age should be registered and evaluated for National Service, with recognitions and some exemptions given for those who have already performed some acknowledged form of service. No exceptions would be recognized, not even for health causes unless extreme, such as total mental incompetence, missing three or more limbs, or physically attached to medical equipment that conflicts with every form of service opportunity. For example, persons with asthma but still able to speak normally might serve as readers to blind persons, or be observers at suspected trouble spots.

2. Acknowledged forms of prior or on-going service include active military duty, cumulative time of active duty in the National Guard and Peace Corps, school teaching in identified problem areas such as ghetto schools, and accumulated time in yet-to-be-recognized service missions (excluding faith-promoting missions).

3. A lifetime cumulative period of two years is considered to be the minimum service time in the initial implementation of this plan. Considering 50 weeks per year and 40 working

hours per week, 2,000 working hours per year (4,000 total) would be the absolute minimum for required National Service. Later it might be raised to be 10% of the adult lifetime of each American. For example, a 48-year old person would be expected to have contributed three years of national service during his or her first thirty adult years.

4. For young adults, paramilitary training and service would be required as part of the two-year obligation. Between ages 18 and 22, every able-bodied young adult would complete at least six-months total (perhaps 3 two-month periods) of full-time active duty including the equivalent of basic training and further service activities under military-style administration. The ability of America to defend itself is enhanced when more and eventually all Americans have had basic military training. American self-discipline is enhanced with the rigors of basic training and discipline. Freedom is not free.

5. America wants tough and important jobs done, and some would require the organizational skills of the military or Peace Corps. Many young adults would be part of the expanded paramilitary forces responsible for certain major international assistance tasks, such as constructing infrastructure and/or providing development training as appropriate to cooperating nations. Others will be part of a highly expanded (perhaps 100 times larger) Peace Corps more focused on appropriate and sustainable enhancement to the lives of impoverished people overseas. As much as possible, each person's training and abilities will be utilized, giving valuable experience not only to recent college graduates, but all citizens entering or re-entering the workforce. Moreover, those who do not go to college will learn job skills in the military while doing three or four years of enlistment, as currently done, but with less military and more civil-development emphasis.

6. As in the current operations of the Peace Corps and military service, active members are paid. But payment beyond food and housing would be minimal and according to need for accomplishing the task. Able-bodied men and women would not be allowed to select easy tasks close to home. Persons who do serve close to home in their spare time would serve extra years and probably receive no payment except the honorable notification of accomplishment and fulfillment of duty. On the other hand, a person serving full time away from home might even receive a hardship bonus depending on the task.

7. Additional service hours could be counted in the time requirements that must be fulfilled by people on the revised welfare system in America. There will be no "free lunch." The welfare system would be much less of an unsupervised handout and much more of a semi-personalized assistance plan with regular supervision. The welfare recipients would be required to participate in appropriate programs. Some program supervision would be by compulsory national service personnel. Other service will be by one welfare recipient who assists another recipient with a different set of problems. All of this involves people and the management of people. And that means job creation of all types. And these are not jobs that could be outsourced overseas. These are American jobs to assist other Americans, bringing dignity even within the welfare system.

8. Persons over the age of 50 could be allowed to make a payment in relation to their net worth and/or gross income that would equal no less than what they would have earned in two years of employment at the highest level of their earning power. No deductions or exemptions would be recognized, not even for taxes paid. No exceptions. Put in the money or put in the time. It could be quite honorable for a highly-paid person to remain in his or her position of financial earning-capacity and accumulate extra years of service via such payments. Consider

the multi-million dollar per year executives and celebrities who could serve well by donating the value of a year of their income once every five years.

9. A very large proportion (perhaps seventy-five percent of the total service) would be directed internationally. This national service performed overseas would be in cooperation with agreeing nations, as in the expanded Peace Corps and other development programs. See Paper No. 16 about “charter nations” and international service.

10. With such a massive increase in national service positions, the American economy would benefit from reduced levels of unemployment as well as the accomplishment of many important tasks that have been neglected in recent decades. The economy is stimulated by service. Service is honorable and commendable. The elevation of service as an important “currency” in America is crucial to the implementation of Capitalism<sup>21</sup>.

The American people, via their elected representatives, have the power to enact laws that would require all Americans to provide some form of national service. Unfortunately a nation stagnant in its self-indulgence (as is America) is unlikely to implement such actions. Our hope is that the realization of the impending serious decline of America will shake the core of our society and generate the desire to implement these proposals along with other necessary changes.

### **Service as a Currency to Help Balance the Power of Money**

In several Papers, I write about the excessive power of money (or the lack it) to impact our democracy and our life-styles. Now, when financial difficulties face our country, we talk even more about money. We fear the loss of jobs and economic recession, where people have less purchasing power and buy less (either because they do not have the money to spend or they shop wisely to save money). But that spending decline causes even more job losses, causing leadership to provide stimulus packages that encourage more spending. This is an apparent contradiction that needs analysis. The root of the problem concerns WHAT is purchased. Americans must spend less on the unnecessary and spend more, much more, on the truly necessary. Some experts point out the need to “spend” our way out of a recession or depression, and such must be done wisely.

**The unnecessary:** Prosperous America was attacked on 9-11-2001. Part of President G. W. Bush’s response was to encourage Americans to be normal and to go out and spend. There was no tightening of belts or encouragement of spending in the direction favoring important necessities. And the people did spend on many, many unnecessary items. We need to be mindful of the difference between functional clothes vs. fashionable clothes, home-cooked nutritious food vs. fancy restaurants and fast-foods, high MPG vehicles vs. SUVs, adequate housing vs. extravagant homes, interesting vacations vs. luxurious travels, competent legislation vs. pork-barrel projects, savings vs. credit-card debt, *etc.* Note that most of this unnecessary spending is related to personal satisfaction under the control of individuals acquiring benefits for themselves, not from government programs. That may bring some solace from the vantage of the taxpayer, but the problem of unnecessary spending did not start in 2001. It has been creeping into America for many decades. And the same problem occurred in earlier great nations, all of which have fallen from their positions of tremendous power. The self-indulgences of Roman leaders and citizens are legendary and led to their eventual weakness; someday the self-indulgences in America under Capitalism<sup>20</sup> may be similarly viewed as foreshadowing our decline.

**The necessary:** If we had spent less lavishly we should have had some funds for the important tasks of better schooling, safer neighborhoods, larger Peace Corps, social programs

with more human interaction and less handouts, improved mass transit, infrastructure maintenance, adequate (not lavish) health care for all citizens, and even perhaps a close-to-balanced budget. Please note that almost everything listed as necessary is strongly related to some form of governmental control or sponsorship (IF the government acts responsibly instead of wastefully). Do not expect the wealthy to provide these necessities in their unprompted course of goodwill. They are too busy leading the way to conspicuous consumption.

Recently I heard a news commentator say that in these financially-constricting times we should lower taxes on the lower and middle classes so they would have more money to spend. I agree and add that within the lower the economic classes, a greater the percentage of their money would be (or at least should be) spent on necessities, including debt reduction. Concerning the wealthy, the commentator advised postponing any increases in taxes on the wealthy because that would restrict their spending. Certainly with higher taxes they would have less money to spend, but to spend it on what? They spend firstly on themselves choosing the lavish and unnecessary (the mansions and SUVs and fancy stuff), and proportionately little on the “necessary” components named above.

This leads to **a key point in Capitalism21: Promote and encourage the fountains of wealth in America to stream their money into the “necessary” categories of spending.** Some multi-billionaires are already started on that road (*e.g.*, Gates, Buffet, Bloomberg), and they are not suffering in their life-styles. Others should share generously also. And if they do not, then our laws should be changed to provide for them increased incentive to do more service with their money. How? By adopting a tax structure that rewards service through donations and sponsorships to approved activities of national benefit.

For example, if a person earns more than five million dollars (gross income with few deductions allowed), then 80% of the amount over five million can be given tax free to acceptable (approved) activities for the benefit of the nation. Assume that a sports star or TV personality earns \$10 million per year. The extra five million would generate \$4 million for approved projects, and the person still keeps one million dollars. Perhaps the \$4 million would be for scholarships and grants for improved schools or security in a challenged neighborhood near the professional athlete’s sports stadium, or to promote investigative news reporting by students (sponsored but not controlled by news commentators), or assistance to activist groups concerning the environment or drug dealing or other issues that should be exposed and corrected. We would all cheer for that wealthy person who is doing so much good with his or her money. And if he or she declined to do that service, then the \$4 million would be collected as income tax revenue, and then the government could try to improve schools and security, *etc.*

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I hope you understand these basic ideas about accomplishing more service through time-on-task and through money-directed-for-service. All people, whether rich or poor, need to break away from the distorting influences of money and self-serving indulgences. We need to start using our money and our time in the service of our nation. I revisit this subject in later Papers to give more details and examples.

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This concludes the five essays on the Five Realms of Power (Papers 4 through 8). The realms of power are out of balance in America. Capitalism21 is introduced as a way to restore the needed balances. In particular, the currency of service must be strengthened and the currency of money brought under appropriate control. Perhaps these rather unusual and challenging

proposals might not be agreeable to you. But I hope you will be supportive of the need for discussion. What is important is whether or not the proposals would be good for America and for the World. America must discuss and decide (or face the consequences of inaction). I believe our current realities and proposed solutions as outlined in the next two Papers direct us to alter the course of America's destiny. YOU must discuss and act. I have only the single voice of

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An American volunteer for service