

Where to look for generosity

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What's your favorite human trait?

Hard to answer, huh? Integrity, compassion, humor, wisdom, humility, transparency and, of course, love are some of my favorites.

But generosity ought to be at or near the top of anybody's list. I like generous people. Not because they give me things. (Sometimes, that's downright uncomfortable.) But because generosity says so much about a person. I've never known a generous person who wasn't kind. Generous people usually strike me as being compassionate and honest, as well as humble and respectful. You could make a strong case that generosity is the bellwether of numerous virtues. If you're generous, the others come with the package. If you're miserly, don't look for much else.

If you want to meet generous people, your best bet is to head to Birmingham, Ala., according to a new survey by the [Tijeras Foundation](#). The foundation's vision is to create "better enabled, more elevated and encouraged Christian organizations; more personal lives enriched by God's grace; increased evidence of God being honored in the name of Jesus Christ within our society."

Top and bottom

Birmingham is the most generous city in America. Its residents donate 3.6 percent of their income to charity. Memphis, Tenn., came in second, at 3.4 percent, and Columbia, S.C., ranked third, at 3.2 percent.

Sadly, Texas didn't place any cities in the [top 10](#) of the 60 communities studied nationwide. But we got two in the bottom 10. San Antonio came in dead last, with residents contributing only 1.7 percent of income to charity.

Austin came in five places better, tied with Boston, Honolulu, and Fort Lauderdale, Fla., at 2.0 percent.

What makes for generosity?

Tijeras Foundation staffers told the [Birmingham News](#) four factors indicate generosity: Generous communities have a higher percentage of evangelical Christians, married couples, entrepreneurs and African-Americans.

You'd think Texas, with all its Baptists and other conservative Christians, can-do spirit and emphasis on traditional families, would produce at least one or two cities that cracked the top 10 and would steer clear of the bottom 10. But as reaction to my recent [blog on tithing](#) showed, we're not of one mind about what God expects of Christians.

Still, if Baptists took tithing and storehouse giving seriously, then our communities would be marked by generosity. And we'd make a greater difference in our culture.