

REPAYING A DEBT

How do we repay someone for a kindness rendered to us? We treat another person with similar graciousness and consideration. That important principle was beautifully described by Benjamin Franklin in 1784 when he wrote the following letter to a man named Benjamin Webb:

Dear Sir: Your situation grieves me and I send you herewith a banknote for 10 louis d'or. I do not pretend to give such a sum; I only lend it to you. When you shall return to your country, you cannot fail of getting into some business that will in time enable you to pay all your debts.

In that case, when you meet with another honest man in similar distress, you must pay me by lending the sum to him, enjoining him to discharge the debt by a like operation when he shall be able and shall meet with such another opportunity.

I hope it may thus go through many hands before it meets with a knave that will stop its progress. This is a trick of mine for doing a deal of good with a little money. I am not rich enough to afford much in good works, and so am obliged to be cunning and make the most of a little.

With best wishes for your future prosperity, I am, dear sir, your most obedient servant. B. Franklin.

If our relationships and desire to help one another could be translated into the kind of action Ben Franklin outlines, similar to a pebble thrown into a quiet body of water, the effects would move in an ever-widening circle.

--Beecher Hunter