

The Greatest Gift of All

As I was lying awake in bed this morning, I thought about some of the gifts I've received in my life. Some of which may not be considered significant to others, but to me, each was significant and priceless. In some instances, the gift was life changing and no amount of money could have purchased it. Others, though seemingly small, made a big impact.

The definition of the word gift according to Webster is something given or received without being earned and it can be tangible or intangible.

My two favorite months of the year are November and December. In November, I enjoy hearing people express thankfulness. They seem to do this more at this time than they usually do.

In December, people are more open to hearing what the Christmas season is really all about. This is heard through the music of Christmas carols, church services, signage, and etc.

Secularism's influence, however, is of such magnitude in America today during the Christmas season that oftentimes it's hard to hear the true reason for the season, which is the birth of Jesus Christ and the gospel message. Satan's goal is to drown out anything and everything that promotes the message of Jesus Christ.

This year, I don't want the time to go by without mentioning just a few of the many significant gifts (December) I've received in my life and my thankfulness for them (November). Some are tangible, some are intangible.

I am thankful for gift:

#10 - I received my first pair of winter boots when I was 26 years old. Since I grew up the seventh of ten children and the third of five girls almost everything I owned was a hand-me-down or something I had to share with at least one other sibling. Each year my parents got me one pair of school and one pair of Sunday shoes.

The first year I was married to Dave he gave me a tan pair of winter hiking boots as a Christmas gift. The year was 1977. I remember, they had a red, soft, furry lining. In my mind's eye, I can still see them. I had never owned a pair of boots before. I remember, too, crying real tears when I opened the box and Dave told me I didn't have to share them with anyone!

#9 - my first job out of college. This gift was that of becoming a social worker for the Shelby County Welfare Dept. in Shelbyville, Indiana.

#8 - saying the opening prayer for my high school graduation. This was the first time I had ever said a prayer out loud. It happened to be in front of a lot of people and I was so nervous but, today, as a chaplain for the Columbus Police Department, Columbus, Indiana and as a conference and retreat speaker, I'm grateful for this first experience.

#7 - my copy of "Jesus Calling." Reading this each day before I pray during devotions helps me to better focus.

#6 - my professional women's prayer group that meets in my counseling office the first and third Wednesdays of each month. What a precious group of soul sisters these eight women are!

#5 - my daughters, Erin, Ashly and her husband, Aaron, which therefore, is my son.

#4 - my 18 month old grandson, Anderson David Stacy, who lives in Austin, TX

#3 - my deceased husband and best friend, Dave

#2 - GOD's GRACE, need I say more?!

#1 - Jesus Christ. He has been my all time greatest gift! I got to know Him better from the first Bible my parents gave me as a Christmas gift after I became a Christ follower as a 16 year old.

Though I've only mentioned a few gifts, you can see I've been overwhelmingly blessed by being on the receiving end of the generosity of many people, all of whom have been hand picked and strategically placed in my life by the God I serve, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

I can tell you in all honesty that I did not deserve any of these gifts but God loves me so much He has given more to me than I could ever, ever, ever have imagined possible.

As I bring this column to a close, today, I have three questions for you. What are some of the gifts you've received throughout your life that have been significant? Have you expressed to the people who gave them to you your thankfulness and appreciation for them? Lastly, are you willing to make this, more than ever before, the year in which you verbally express your thankfulness for the tangible and intangible gifts you've received from others, past and present?

Sadly, I have known people who are givers only and I've known people who are receivers only but the happiest, healthiest and most blessed people I've ever known are those who have been able to both give and receive.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!

2 Corinthians 9:15 says, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift."

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