

GIFTS OF GREAT VALUE

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I Corinthians 13:1-3

1. In case you have not noticed Christmas is fast becoming Xmas.
 2. Christmas use to primarily be a religious holiday with some secular overtones.
 3. It is now primarily a secular holiday with some religious overtones.
 4. The positive side of this trend is that light becomes all the more important as the darkness deepens.
 5. We need to be distinctively different from the culture in which we find ourselves.
 6. Jesus stated that His followers were the light of the world.
- NOTE: God has made no other provision for those who walk in darkness.
7. Paul admonished, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world." Philippians 2:14-15
 8. We manifest Christ's light when we are motivated by His love.
 9. In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 the Apostle Paul pointed out that anything we do that is not motivated by the love of God working in and through our lives is without meaning and value from God's perspective.
 10. This principle negates the value of a lot of the giving that takes place this time of the year.
 11. This morning I want to share some gifts of great value that money can't buy, but, by the grace of God, all of us can give to others.

I. The gift of unconditional love.

A. This gift is divine in its origin.

1. John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

2. Romans 5:8

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

B. Jesus commanded that His followers manifest unconditional love, and He pointed out that the ability to do so would identify us as His disciples.

1. Matt 5:43-48

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' 44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 "Therefore you are to be perfect (in manifesting love), as your heavenly Father is perfect (in manifesting love).

2. John 13:34-35

34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

C. Jesus defined love. I John 3:16

"We know (define) love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

D. The love of God is active and not passive. I John 3:18

"Little children, let us love not with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."

E. Think about someone who needs to be loved unconditionally but does not deserve to be. Galatians 6:10

"So then, while we (still) have opportunity, let us do good to all men and especially to those who are of the household of faith."

II. The gift of intercessory prayer.

A. Note Jesus' prayer on our behalf. John 17

1. "I ask on their behalf..." 9

2. "Keep them in Your name..." 11

3. "Keep them from the evil one..." 15

4. "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." 17

5. "I do not ask on behalf of these alone (the Apostles), but for those also who believe in Me through their word." 20

6. "That they may be with Me where I am." 24

B. Jesus is even now interceding for us in heaven. Hebrews 7:27

"He always lives to make intercession for them (us),"

C. We are to pray for each other as Christians. Eph 6:18-20

18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

D. We are to care about and pray for the lost. Matt 9:35-38

35 Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. 36 Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

E. Do you regularly pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ? How about those who make your lives difficult? Matthew 5:44

"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

III. The gift of a listening ear.

A. Our God is a God who hears.

1. He hears His children. Psalm 4:3

"But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself; the Lord hears when I call to Him.

2. He hears the needy. Psalm 69:32-33
 “The humble have seen it and are glad; you who seek God, let your heart revive. For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise His who are prisoners.”
 3. He has inclined His ear to us. Psalm 116:1-2
 “I love the Lord, because He hears my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live.”
- B. As His followers we too should incline our ears to hear.
1. Proverbs 18:13
 “He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.”
 2. James 1:19
 “But let **everyone** be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.”
- NOTE: Sadly most people, even Christians, are much more interested in talking than in listening.

IV. The gift of wise counsel. (Wise counsel and the ability to listen go hand in hand.)

- A. The overriding principle here is, “Speak the truth in love...” Ephesians 4:15
- B. Proverbs 27:5-7
 “Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”
- C. Proverbs 27:9
 “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man’s counsel is sweet to his friend.”
- D. Paul declared, “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish (counsel) one another.” Romans 15:14
- E. We are to, “...lay aside falsehood, and speak truth, each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.” Ephesians 4:25
- F. We are to speak words of encouragement to one another. Heb 10:24-25
 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
- G. We are to witness to the lost. Rom 1:13-17
 14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

APPLICATION

1. Investing in others can be a thankless task at times.
2. Continuing to do so has its own rewards.
 - a. The knowledge that we are fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives.
 - b. The knowledge that we are laying up treasures in heaven.
 - c. The joy of being used by the Lord in someone’s life.
 - d. The inner sense that God is pleased with us.
3. Pray that God will shed His love abroad in your heart through the Holy Spirit.
4. Ask God to make you an instrument of His love by loving unconditionally, by praying for others, by learning to listen, and by enabling you to become a wise counselor.