

Sermon Title: It's Better to Receive in Order to Give

Last week we talked about the gift of love, a gift that truly keeps on giving! How are we doing so far with giving this gift to others/situations this past week?

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, that there are 3 things that abide... endure... last... that keep on giving... **Faith, Hope, & Love!**

Today we will talk about the gift of faith! **For it truly is a gift of/from God!**

Ephesians 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Faith is not our gift to God, it is God's gift to us! Everything we believe... Even the act of accepting the gospel... is a gift that God bestows upon us!

Faith is received... but it is also exercised! “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” – Ephesians 2:10

Faith is not like most Christmas presents that we open and put on a shelf. It is an instrument/tool to **put to use**, fulfilling God's purpose in our lives!

What are you/I doing with the gift of faith? What kind of gift has it proven to be in our lives? **“I will show you my faith by what I do!”**

If we are people of true faith, it should be evident to others! Do we think... believe... act... differently! Does Christmas look & sound different for us?

Faith sets us apart! It motivates us to live differently! It leads to the packing 495 OCC boxes, giving towards hurricane relief, adopting families for Christmas, serving hot meals to those in need in Cleveland, ringing the Salvation Army bell...

Faith gives... because faith itself is a gift received from another! But the greatest gift faith gives is faith itself! Faith is often caught before it is taught!

For most of us, faith was modeled for us by others, and their example was the means by which the gift of God was received into our lives!

Who has passed on the gift of faith to you? _____

What a gift that people of faith are in our lives! **This is how faith keeps on giving, by passing it on from one person/family/generation to another!**

Can you think of any better Christmas gift to give than the gift of your faith?

Our faith needs to be heard - **“Faith comes from hearing...”** It needs to be seen – **“Faith without deeds...”** It needs to be experienced! – **Mustard seed**

How are we giving the gift of faith by sharing it with others this Christmas?

- Don't just share your “wants” list with others... Share God's “wants” list!
- Don't just read through the holiday adds... Read through your Bible!
- **Don't just decorate any tree this year... Decorate a Jesse tree!**
- Don't just count down the days until Christmas, use a Biblical advent calendar & make the journey to the manger with your family!
- **Don't just do “Elf on the Shelf”... focus on “Ewe in the Pew”!**
- Don't just give gifts to your family, give gifts to an adopted family!
- Don't just invite family members to your Christmas gatherings, invite someone to join you who doesn't have a family to gather with!
- **Don't just read the “Night Before Christmas” as a family, read the Biblical account of the night before Christmas as a family on Christmas Eve!**
- Don't just watch Christmas movies all month long, go visit shut-ins!
- Don't just send Christmas cards to your family & friends, send them to those who most people would not choose to send one to!
- **Don't just check off all the names on your shopping list, make a list of all the names of Jesus & check off all the ways He is God's gift to us!**
- Don't just listen to Christmas music all month, go and sing some of those songs at a nursing home!
- **Don't just put a nativity scene up in your house, give the nativity scene to someone else, one piece at a time!**
- Don't just get your family picture with Santa, get your family in the picture of what God is doing in your community!
- **Don't just participate in gift exchanges, give gifts to others without expectation of anything in return!**
- Don't just write a letter to Santa, write a letter to Jesus (a prayer) lifting up the wants/needs of others!
- **Don't just do the same old things, start a new faith tradition this Christmas!**

When we live out our faith in ways like this, **we are passing on the greatest gift to those around us!** Let us give the gift of a vibrant faith being lived!

Faith is a gift we receive, and a gift we share with others! It is said, “It's better to give than to receive!” I say, “It's better to receive in order to give!”

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