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“An Appropriate Gift”

Imagine the gifts that are given at Valentine’s Day. Sometimes they are flowers. Chocolates, jewelry. What is an appropriate gift to give? Gym Membership? Exercise equipment, Home Improvements, an appliance, vacuum cleaner, coffee mug with a heart on it, lingerie, or a football jersey from your favorite team?

Ever consider what might have been given by some of the famous couples of the Bible. The following is a list given to me by someone a while back. People used to hand me things to read for fun. This was one of those. It’s not mine so I apologize for not knowing the reference. But consider:

Gifts from Adam to Eve—New Victoria’s Secret Skins and a basket of Apples. For Him, new sheers to cut back the thorns in the Garden.

Gifts from Abraham to Sarah—A gift basket of ensure and baby-bottles.

Gifts from Jacob to Leah—A new veil. For Rachel a coupon book with seven years of special treats.

Gifts from David to Bathsheba—A basket full of bath-bombs and shower gels.

Gifts from King Solomon—new altars for all 1000 concubines and wives.

Gifts from Pilate to his wife—An apology for not taking her advice about Jesus.

Gifts from Hosea to his wife Gomer—A gps tracker to help keep her out of trouble.

Gifts from King Herod to his wife—A lucrative Life Insurance Policy that made him the benefactor.

Gift from Jezebel to her husband, King Ahab,—Permission to wear the pants in the family once in a while/and a vineyard.

Gift of Samson to his Philistine wife—a picture of himself and his long flowing hair.

Gift from Delilah—a pair of scissors and two glass eyes.

Moses’ gift to his wife, Zipporah—An all expense paid vacation in the wilderness.

Joseph’s gift to his wife, Mary—A new donkey with low mileage to ride to Jerusalem each year for Passover.

Rebekah’s gift to her husband, Isaac—new glasses, some stew, and a new fur coat.

This list is kind of fun. But God’s gift to us is much more helpful and meaningful. The gift is Jesus, of course. And the fullest expression of love ever given to the world is His cross. We all know the verse. John 3:16—“For God so loved the World that He have his one and only Son so that whoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life.” English translations have the emphasis on the fact that God loved the world.

The context in which Nicodemus inquires takes his secret conversation with Jesus much farther; back to Moses who raised a serpent on a pole. Nicodemus would immediately understand the context

from Numbers 21. The Israelites in the wilderness were being bitten by serpents. They cried out to the Lord. So, the Lord instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it up on a pole for all to see. Attached to the serpent was a promise that all who were bit and then looked at it would live. Listening to John 3 what do we hear?

¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

And then what follows vs. 14-15 is the most famous verse in scripture. But here I offer a clarification to the way in which it should be read. John 3:16—“*In this same way*, God loved the world that He gave His one and only Son so that whoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life.” The verse doesn’t just tell us that God loved the world but it tells us in fact, *how* God loved the World; a world bitten by a serpent in the Garden. But lifting up Jesus on a cross, like a bronze serpent, so that anyone who looks to Him and believes will be given life.

Imagine how the pieces must have come together for Nicodemus when he saw Jesus lifted up on the cross. It was enough for his faith to come out of hiding. And he and Joseph of Aramathea took the time to bury Jesus in Joseph’s family tomb. Nicodemus believed Jesus as Messiah.

And isn’t this the true gift. It’s not the fact that you love someone that is the emphasis—but how you love them. Love is expressed and active—patient and kind, not envious or boastful; but sacrificial as one laying down His life for His friends. Jesus didn’t just say He loved us but loved us by what He did. He gave His life on the Cross. Now His resurrection promises eternal life.

Likewise, how we love people reveals how we feel about them. And the best gifts that we bring to those we love are much more transformational. I don’t remember all the individual things that my wife has bought me, for instance, or all the meals she has made, or how many times she has cleaned the house. I can say she has been consistent and gracious in all of them. I do remember her dedication to our children, her care of me, and her consistent and faithful attention to her family. I am a much better person not because of her gifts to me. I am a better person because she has given herself as the gift. And I am eternally grateful for the way that she loves me. That’s why I buy roses, and get candies, or offer something nice and do everything I can to help her. I do something as often as I have opportunities to say, “thank you” in as many ways as I can. I try to give my best to her in whatever form I can offer it.

And so, this week I offer a blessed Valentine’s Day. I encourage you to give thanks to Jesus by loving those who have been given to us as gifts. And may the Lord bless you with His love.

I’m Pastor Woods. May the Lord bless your week and your family.
John 3:30