
VISION FORWARD



The 5 Gift Rule and God's Surprising Gift to You

by Pastor Jonathan Evans

By now many of you have heard of the 5 Gift Rule. The trend helps minimize the chaos that can be Christmas shopping, as well as limit the amount of gifts we give to one another. The parameters of the 5 Gift Rule are:

1. Something they want
2. Something they need
3. Something to wear
4. Something to read
5. Something they need or want but don't really know it

It's gift number 5 that I'm thinking about as I write this. Something they need or want but don't really know it. This is the gift that blows them away. That surprises them entirely.

At Christmas, we celebrate the gift of the Son of God. The giving of the Son by the Father to the world. Free to us but at great cost to Himself, it is in so many ways the Gift we need and want, but don't really know it. Until. Until the Spirit of God opens the eyes of our heart to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Christ is the gift we never ever get over. He's the gift we always need and always want and, by the grace of God, is never withdrawn or withheld. In Him all the treasures and riches of God are found, given, received, and treasured.

But there's another aspect to gift number 5 that I'm also thinking about. God's gift to us of one another.

There is something in others I need and I want, but don't really know it. Because we are all individual members of the body of Christ, we can never truly say to one another, "I have no need of you" or "I'm complete apart from you". There is a reason the eye needs the hand, and the head needs the feet. And there comes a moment when we realize it. We see it, we feel it, we rejoice in it. Because this need or this want speaks to, and reveals to us, God's love for us. He's connected me to other members of the body, he's connected them to me.

When God said to Adam, "It is not good for man to be alone," it was indicative not of God's love for poetry but of His creative wisdom and power in creation. He made us all and fashioned us each with a need for others that we can never get away from. In other words, it's a given in life: you will never "be all you can be" independent of others. Not even half of what you can be. You can only truly and fully become yourself in the presence of others, in relationship with others.

As you approach Christmas and consider the gifts you give and receive—maybe with help of the 5 Gift Rule—find a moment to consider the gift that is a specific person in your life, a specific people in your life. You need them. God knows this. He's gifted them to you.

So, for example, if you're a new parent, you need other parents, not only who are where you are on the journey, but also who are further up ahead and have gone through the same challenges you face.

If you're married, you'll need other marriages, not only at the same stage, but also several beyond, who are willing to encourage you, teach you, challenge you, and correct you.

If you're younger, you need those older and more experienced in life than you. And if you're older, you need those younger than you, because, yes, we can learn from them something new or a new way of doing something old.

There are many other examples, yet it remains true for all us, regardless of age and season, experience or wisdom: there's something we ALWAYS NEED in "one another". This is God's gift to us, if we will receive it.

Dear Elim Grace, the friends, family, and fellow members of the body of Christ, are each a gift you need and want but may not really know it. Yet. May this be the season you are blown away. Surprised entirely! May you come to realize and appreciate and treasure who they really are to you and what they really mean for your life.

I leave you with an excerpt from C.S. Lewis, who can say things far better than I could ever hope to. But before I do, Merry Christmas, Elim Grace! I love you and I give thanks to God for placing you in my life.

"In friendship...we think we have chosen our peers. In reality a few years' difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses, the choice of one university instead of another...the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting--any of these chances might have kept us apart. But, for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking no chances. A secret master of ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," can truly say to every group of Christian friends, "Ye have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another." The friendship is not a reward for our discriminating and good taste in finding one another out. It is the instrument by which God reveals to each of us the beauties of others." (The Four Loves)