The Acts of Giving and Receiving

For several weeks now and at least for the rest of the month we will be bombarded by TV commercials and newspaper advertisements with items for giving. Their messages seems to be that you can give more for less, these are items that others will want, you must not disappoint, and you have to hurry because you do not want to miss getting these items. Suddenly giving can seem overwhelming.

I thought it would be appropriate to talk about giving and receiving. What is giving really? When I have talked about giving I start by saying that “giving is free”. I usually get a strange look of not understanding. Then I try to further explain. The act of giving is one person simply giving to someone else. There are so many reasons that one would want to give. A few I would suggest are that you would like to help someone, you especially like a person, you have appreciated something that they have done, you know that the person needs a little emotional lift, you want to give a person some encouragement, or you strongly believe in giving. Next you decide the kind of gift that you are want to make. Many gifts are items, something that you bought or something that you made. Some gifts are using your skills and talents for someone else. Others are giving some of your time to a person. Many are a few kind words and a gentle touch. Then you make your gift.

But the most important part of giving is your attitude. With true giving, you do not expect anything back from the person. This is a selfless act. You simply wanted the person to have your gift. Unfortunately many do not understand this necessary attitude of giving. They really have a hidden agenda. They give for their own benefit and want the person to give back something they want from the person. I would call this interaction with another person a business transaction, a contract, or barter. Usually these agreements are carried on with both individuals knowledge not just one.

As a receiver your attitude is equally important. More often than not the receiver is caught unaware. Suddenly someone gives something to you. Of course you are surprised and do not know what to do or say. You may feel undeserving, embarrassed because of a need, obligated to now give back to the person, or even anger. You may want to try to get out of this situation by finding some way to say no. But if you pause and remember that a gift is free, you can accept the gift graciously. This person thought enough of you that they wanted to something kind. You are special. They are special. It would be rude to deny that person’s kindness. A simple “Thank You” is all that is needed. Treasure each gift that you receive.

Give often and freely and receive with gratitude. You are setting an example. In doing so you will further increase civility in our community. The receivers of your giving will give to others, they to others and so on. With these attitudes, I am sure that this not only holiday season will be especially enjoyable for you all, but so will the rest of your life.

Happy Holidays and see you in the New Year.

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