

Love Others Using God's Gifts

How do you show Love to those around you? Those who are closest to you? By putting the needs and desires of others before your own. How do you know those needs and desires? Be observant and pray for wisdom. It is best to fill the needs of others without needing to be asked because you already know the need and desire to fill it.

My wife has a list of gifts that I can refer to whenever I'm stumped and don't know what to get her (which is often). She appreciates and likes what I get her well enough. But when I surprise her with something unexpected that I know will make her happy she is all the more appreciative because she didn't have to explain to me what she needed I knew because I was paying attention and I moved on that desire without needing to be prodded. I admit I don't do this anywhere near as often as I ought to with her or others. But there is no doubt in my mind that it is a greater way of loving others.

God has done this. He knew we needed a salvation that could only come from Him. We did not ask for Christ. Even today many people don't know they need Christ and yet, God gave us Christ for our salvation out of Love and knowing it was what we needed.

How can we show that kind of Love to those around us? There is no easy answer because it's not always as simple as feed the hungry. That's a good place to start. But what more can you give of yourself that another person needs? Perhaps the gift you give is companionship to someone who is lonely. It may be that you give a gift of money to someone who is in need or perhaps God opens the door wider and you can help that person become a better steward of what they have. Perhaps you have a skill that is in demand and can offer it freely to others who need it but can't afford to pay.

One of the benefits of living in close community and being a collection of smaller groups is that we have the opportunity to know each other very well and spend time with each other throughout the week. Through that we get to learn each others' strengths and weaknesses. I get to know how I can help you and you get to know how you can help me. This is something that is harder to do with larger groups. But the benefit of the larger group is that we can come together to fill needs that a single house church may not be able to fill.

God makes best use of us when we are making use of the gifts He has given each of us for the benefit of someone else. Each one of us has something to offer the other. And each one of us needs something we can only get from God. But He often provides it through the gifts He has given to someone else. When we restrain ourselves from helping someone or offering to share our gifts with those around us we may be denying ourselves the opportunity to deliver a gift from God. God can always find someone else to do the work. So when we bottle up what He has given us we really are harming ourselves and denying ourselves the opportunity to serve God in a very tangible way.

One thing people can struggle with is not being sure what their gifting is. There are plenty of things I can

do or have learned to do but am not gifted in. This is also an area where we can turn to those who are closest to us to get some honest and objective feedback on what our gifts are and aren't. We can help each other grow our gifts by allowing each to contribute in some way. On Sunday that could look like having different people teach, lead worship, offer prayers, or make communion bread. Through the week that could look like asking for help from someone you feel is gifted in an area you need help with. Perhaps that's wisdom, comfort, or the guts of a toilet replaced so it will stop leaking.

By asking help from people in a way that allows them to use their gifts you help strengthen their confidence and in some ways their gifts. By offering help to someone in need of it you are not only showing your love for them but you are also giving them a blessing from God. This small congregation is a wonderful way for us to learn to do these things but it is also important for us to remember to reach out to those around us and show this kind of love and community to others around us.

1 Peter 4:7-11 “But the end of all things is near. Therefore be of sound mind, self-controlled, and sober in prayer. And above all things be earnest in your love among yourselves, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, employ it in serving one another, as good managers of the grace of God in its various forms. If anyone speaks, let it be as it were the very words of God. If anyone serves, let it be as of the strength which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”