

# Give more than just socks or a tie

The holiday season is on us.

No matter what your religious persuasion may be, it seems to be the time of year where many people's minds turn to thoughts of giving; so here, in no particular order, is a set of great things you can give that will amount to more than just socks or a tie.

1. The gift of Time. Yes, you will find it hard to wrap it up and put a bow on top, and you can't really give time in a bottle -- no matter how hard you try. But we can give commitments to spend more time with our loved ones. Try making a coupon good for an hour's worth of talking time (make a whole bunch of them), and then hand them out to the kids and your loved ones. I doubt you'll see many of them turned back in -- but if you do, realize that it's going to be one of the most important coupons you'll ever accept.

2. the gift of a Positive outlook. I was sitting in church a couple of weeks ago, and the religious leader at the podium stated that he knew 2010 was going to be very, very bad. Hey, maybe it will and maybe it won't, but try and keep your conversations positive. Leaders who focus on the negative aspects of life don't do anyone any good. Keep your eye singled toward the positive benefits that life can bring, and always look toward the possibility that things aren't quite as bad as they may seem. The truth is that in any circumstance, no matter what it is, you can look for the bad or you can look for the good. Most of the time, our lives are what we make of them -- not what they make of us.

Keep your outlook positive, your conversations upbeat, and keep your attitude pointed toward the best that you can be. Will you hit downturns along the way to your destination? Maybe -- but you're going to hit a whole lot more problems if you look for the negative things in life -- let me assure you of that.

3. The gift of Caring. You know, it's altogether too easy to stop caring about people, things, even life in general. It's totally easy to just give up and stop caring. In fact, some people suggest you do it! What kind of world would this be if people stopped caring? Unfortunately, too many people have gotten that way already -- but that doesn't mean it's something we should do. One of the best things about humans is that mostly we care about each other -- and when we

stop caring, stop feeling, stop working to help, then we turn into mindless idiots who only worry about the bottom line. The real downside to doing that, of course, is that when we stop caring about other people, they get to where they don't give a damn about us, either. Of course, when we stop caring, maybe we don't deserve anyone to give a damn about us, anyway.

4. The gift of Loving. Yes, yes -- I'm not trying to turn this into an Oprah show. I don't want us all to hold hands and sing songs. But when you get right down to it, as human beings, we've got to love someone, sometime. We're wired for it. We need to be loved, and we need to love. And we need to give love to others, because they need love too.

5. The gift of Service. Serve others when you can -- even if it's as simple as putting money in the Salvation Army bucket at Christmas time. Why should you serve when you can? Because service does too great things: it makes the world a better place, and it makes you a better person.

6. The gift of Laughter. It seems odd to say it, I guess, but laughter may not be the best medicine, but it's pretty darn close. Laugh a lot, and your world will improve. Help others to learn to laugh, and your world will improve even more.

7. The gift of Motivation. True leaders learn that motivation is almost everything to success. Helping others to believe in themselves is a priceless gift that can be a real life-changing experience -- and it doesn't cost anything, doesn't come in the wrong size, and can be re-gifted without ever giving it up. It's like a torch that can light other fires within the people you meet.

As we go through 2009's holiday time, let's remember that not all gifts can be purchased from Amazon.com. (But for those that can, please use [this link](#)). Some of the most important gifts are those that can not be wrapped, not be labeled, not be enclosed in a box or tied shut with a bow. Giving of yourself is the most important gift you can give this year, or any other year.

Now, a last note to the men who read this piece: Men, remember these words from the Wall Street Journal's Elizabeth Bernstein: **"If I ask my husband what he wants for the holidays, he will say "nothing" and mean it. If he asks me, I will say "nothing" as well. And God help him if he believes me."**

And I've still got some shopping to do for my wife, I think...

Happy Holidays.

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