

The Laity Minute
December 2018

It is the time of year for gifts. Lots and lots of gifts. Big, small, and everywhere in between. In fact, the experts are predicting sales for Holiday 2018 to be around \$1.1 trillion. That is quite a figure, isn't it? It is almost hard to wrap one's head around a number like that. Having spent my non-academic career in retail and now continuing to study consumer behavior as a professor, I have seen the good, bad and the ugly of gifting this time of year. Working retail on the last Saturday before Christmas is something everyone should do. There is nothing quite like it. Either way, I can see how spending could certainly reach that astronomical figure this year.

Many of us spend so much time searching for the "perfect gift." We search the store, on ground and online. We obtain the gift, wrap the gift, and we place it under the tree for those special recipients in hope that it will make them as happy receiving it as we are giving it to them. Many of us enjoy receiving a gift from someone who loves us, as well. Some of us may even remember a gift or two that we will always deem as being "perfect." I'll never forget the Barbie Dream House Christmas, for example!

But, do you know that you already possess a "perfect gift?" Further, did you realize you already have the ability to give the "perfect gift?"

Let me explain. One of the classes I took for my Laity certification was, "Spiritual Gifts." It was a course where we learned what our spiritual gifts could be via thinking exercises, spiritual inventory, and even a fun quiz to let us know where our gifts lie. (There are plenty online if you would like to take one of the quizzes yourself.) After completing the course, I learned there are many conclusions we can make about gifts. First, all gifts are equal in value. Unlike retail, there is no monetary value placed on our spiritual gifts. Some at Centenary have the gift of music. Others have the gift of working with children. Others still have the gift of managing finances, or planning, or church facility maintenance. But in the end, the actual value of each gift in the realm of faith is the same for each and God has set each gift in place within us. Secondly, the purpose of our gift is to do ministry. Our gifts are not for personal gain. They are talents, skills and resources for doing God's work. Finally, the search for the gift is worthwhile, no matter the outcome. As long as we are using our gifts, we are never without hope.

So, while the world wrestles with what perfect gifts to give this year, you can know you already have a "perfect gift" ready to be given to others. You can also know that one has already been given to you. Maybe you know your "perfect gift" and maybe you do not yet. But, God does. It is a personalized gift just for you. Now it is time for you to open that "perfect gift" and give it to others.

Merry Christmas!