

THE GIFT MUST ALWAYS MOVE There is a tribe of native Americans for whom the act of gift giving has become a sacred duty. Gifts are shared at every occasion from the most routine visits among friends to the most important tribal rituals. It is not an overstatement to say that giving a gift for this group of people is crucial to the very survival of their community.

What is intriguing about this practice of gift giving is that gifts are regularly given, received, and re-given. The same gift might be given and received many times throughout the community. When asked about this unique practice of gift giving, the chief of the tribe said simply, "The gift must always move."

The gift must always move. In other words, for a gift to remain a gift, it must be given and shared. When one person takes it for their own possession, the movement stops and the gift ceases to be a gift. For this particular group of native Americans, the greatest possessions of their tribe were not lifeless artifacts held in one place by one person, but moved throughout the community as a living treasure."

Submitted by Wilfred Webb, Salem Presbyterian Church, Salem, VA.

MISPLACED EMOTION The movie E.T. had an impact on most people when it was first released to the theaters. I remembered taking my five-year-old daughter to see it at a local cinema, and like everyone else there, we were very caught-up in the story as it unfolded. The drama continued to the point where E.T. became ill and died. I heard the sniffles of my daughter on my lap, and I became emotional because she seemed moved by the story. I leaned over and said to her, "What's the matter, honey, are you sad because E.T. died?" She whimpered, "No, my foot's caught in the seat." The tears were just as genuine, but the cause was totally different. This little incident reminded me that many times the pain that is visible in people's lives is not always caused by that which we imagine. It behooves us to discover the real reason and minister in the name of Christ. I removed my daughter's foot from the seat, and the crying stopped. So did mine.

AMBIGUOUS AMBITIONS One day Linus is talking things over with Charlie Brown. He explains to him: "When I get big, I'm going to be a humble little country doctor. I'll live in the city, see, and every morning I'll get up, climb into my sports car and zoom into the country! Then I'll start healing people... I'll heal everybody for miles around!" Then in the last frame he winds it up, "I'll be a world famous humble little country doctor!"

IT'S ALL IN YOUR ATTITUDE Extravagances and luxuries did not exist for my mother. The one exception to her frugality was a frilly nightgown which she had never worn. She explained "I have that nightgown so that if I ever have to go to the hospital, I'll still look nice."

Many years later, my mother began to suffer from a mysterious disease which destroyed her health and vitality. On a winter day just before her sixty-ninth birthday, she packed up her nightgown and checked into the hospital for tests.

The physician confided with me over the final test results: my mother had only a matter of weeks to live. I agonized for days over whether to tell her the news. Was there any hope I could give her?

I decided not to tell her--not just yet. I resolved instead to lift her spirits on her birthday by giving her the most expensive and beautiful matching nightgown and robe I could find. At the very least she would feel like the prettiest person in the hospital, dignified as she lay dying.

After unwrapping the present, my mother said nothing. Finally, pointing to the unwrapped package on her bed, she asked "Would you mind returning it to the store? I don't really want it." She then picked up a newspaper and pointing to an ad for a summertime designer purse. She explained "This is what I really want." Why would my ever-frugal mother want an expensive summer purse in the middle of winter, when she couldn't even use it until June? She probably wouldn't even live to see spring, much less summer!

Then I realized--my mother was asking me how long I thought she would live--if she would make it to summer. Maybe if I thought she'd live long enough to use the purse, then she really would. When I brought the purse to her in her hospital bed, she held it tightly against her, with a smile on her face.

Many years later, that particular purse is long worn out, as are half a dozen others. Next week my mother celebrates her 83rd birthday. My gift to her? The most expensive designer purse I can find. She will use it well!

IT'S UNDENIABLE WHAT A LITTLE LOVE CAN DO