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The Naz Prayer Ministry



A Gift to Remember

As we head into the thick of the gift-giving season, take a moment to recall your most memorable gifts ever. Is there one that stands out from all the rest?

My list would include, among other things, the pure white cocker spaniel when I was about eight years old and an unexpected director's score of Handel's Messiah my senior year of high school. But one of my most memorable gifts of all would be the one given to me by an old man of Injua village. Sitting in my yard, he carefully unwrapped three arrows from their protective covering of banana leaves. They were clearly unlike any arrows of mine.

Oh yes. I had arrows, several of them. I had become barely efficient at shooting the traditional bow made from a branch, whittled clean, both ends tapered with rounded points. The bow "string," a long, quarter-inch wide strip of bamboo, was twisted on each end to form a loop that tucked conveniently over the bow's tapered ends. My early attempts to shoot was a source of pure comic relief to the curious crowd gathered in anticipation of the spectacle. But after six or seven months, I could at least shoot in a straight line, more or less, some of the time.

But then one day an odd incident created a myth that I had become an expert with the bow. A large boar was tearing up my mission station, including gardens, and along with some men nearby I darted across the yard with my trusty bow and arrows. We all lost sight of the beast for a moment, but as I rounded a bend in a path, there he stood calmly rooting to his heart's content. I set the bow and let the arrow fly. That arrow had a mind of its own. I had hoped to spook the critter at best, but instead the arrow flew straight, right into his ear. He dropped dead on the spot. If everybody wanted to believe it was a blue-ribbon shot, it just didn't seem prudent to disillusion them, and even less so after the news got around that no pig was safe on my station.

But the arrows my friend handed me months later on that cool morning were nothing like the ordinary wooden tipped ones on which my reputation had been built. These were special arrows, tips carefully protected with thin bark skin curled tightly around them. My friend removed the covers to reveal bone tips, each from the arm bone of former enemies he had killed in battle. These arrows had been his battle trophies for many years.

If this seems a bit macabre or offensive, please understand. This man was giving me his most treasured possession. His gift honored me as evidence of how much he valued our friendship. I still have them, still protected by his carefully formed bark-skin coverings. I have never received a gift of greater value.

Our most memorable gifts will probably be those that in significant measure evidence the value someone placed in us or met a significant need at the time. These kinds of gifts in some meaningful way impact our lives. I wonder, of all the gifts we have given, how many of them have been truly memorable?

Jesus noted that the greatest gift of all is the sacrifice of love (John 15:13). A parent goes without in order to bless the child. A friend sets aside his own welfare to provide for another. A few years ago, a teacher at the Grove City Christian School shielded a student from an oncoming car at the cost of her own life.

No gift can possibly impact another's life more than our willingness to offer the gift of ourselves.

Taking Our Next Step Together

Lord God, in this special season of giving, birth within us a fresh focus on giving of ourselves and the pure delight of impacting the lives of others. Let us invest in those around us with the seeds of grace so vividly reflected in your choice to step into the environment of our lives at such great cost. Let us care as you care, and may we be willing to set aside our own comfort and convenience to reveal to them the image of your love.