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Returning A Gift and Receiving A Blessing: Asking God for Discernment

A Commentary by Jason Curry



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I have a few colleagues who like to drink, and they enjoy reminding me that Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:1-11). One colleague insists on giving me a bottle of wine every Christmas. He has never asked me if I drink alcohol, he simply gives his "favorite" gift to me as well as other people. I've seen the negative effects of alcohol all of my life, and I've also worked for years as an impatient and outpatient counselor for people who were addicted to alcohol and other drugs; therefore, I have never been inclined to "utilize" his gift. I believe that alcohol has the potential to affect my relationships with people who do and do not know Christ, and it has the potential to negatively impact my relationship with God. Even though I haven't physically given back the bottle of wine to my colleague, I have returned the gift in my heart inasmuch as I refuse to indulge in something that can impede my desire to be in a right relationship

with God and my neighbor.

Deuteronomy 16:19 states: "Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous." The King James Version of the bible translates the word "bribe" as "gift." In an effort to appoint wise and righteous leaders, Moses instructed the judges to avoid taking gifts from people who sought to influence their opinion. History reminds us that the Greeks gave the Trojans the Trojan Horse; a "gift" filled with soldiers who eventually destroyed the city of Troy. Drug dealers often give their potential clients free drugs as "gifts" that are intended to turn them into addicts. Lobbyists, according to Jack Abramoff, often donate millions of dollars to the campaigns of public officials. These financial "gifts" are intended to encourage some leaders to pass legislation that is not always in the public's best interest. Certain businesses

offer credit cards or loans to assist people in "making ends meet;" however, their exorbitant interest rates are designed to keep people in debt for many years. Yes, some people are given jewelry, money or job promotions; however, these "gifts" sometimes distance them from the people or work that they truly love. The scriptures teach us that some gifts should not be accepted because they weren't given with agape love. Some gifts should be returned because they were given with the intent to trap or control. James 1:17 reminds us that "every good gift and every perfect gift comes from above..." so let us pray for God's gift of discernment (Acts 17:11) so that we may truly receive a blessing from heaven.