

**God's Home Store: Gifts for Church Family Members**  
**May 21, 2017**  
**Lynn Haven UMC**

**Introduction**

So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:25–32 NLT)

God’s Home Store contains many gifts we can give our church family. This week we will “shop” in His Word to discover the beautiful ways in which we can glorify God with our words, thoughts and deeds by utilizing them to bless our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Digging Deeper**

**What gifts can we give to our church family?**

Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

- T.H.I.N.K. Are you familiar with this acronym? Before you speak consider what you are about to say in this way: is it TRUTHFUL, HELPFUL, IMPORTANT, NECESSARY and KIND? If it isn’t all of those things, then don’t say it. Do you think carefully before you speak? Words are important. They can be used to either lift up or tear down the people around us. Even if it’s uncomfortable at first, make it a point this week to be an encourager to everyone you meet. Can you think of a time that you were the recipient of a kind gesture or word of praise that helped shift your mood or perspective on a bad situation?

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- “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.” (Psalms 19:14 NLT) Are you a pencil in God’s hands? In other words, do people see evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in the things you say and do? When we give in to our sinful nature by committing unrighteous actions or using unholy words, we bring sorrow to God’s heart. These things create a separation that may start off small, but with every misstep, can darken our hearts and make us unaware that we have even done anything wrong. That is a scary place to be! Have you ever struggled with a situation where you (or a loved one) started making minor mistakes that ended up creating bigger, soul-shaking troubles? How did you (or they) overcome this separation from God?

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- The verse above from Ephesians gives us guidance on things we should avoid. Read Galatians 5:22-23. God's Home Store (the Bible) contains the good news of the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit forms uniquely in each of us. Turning to the God's word can help redirect a bad attitude or behavior that is in direct conflict with these traits defined as being fruits of the spirit. Do you have a few favorite verses that help you let go of bitter feelings?

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- Forgiveness doesn't always come all at once. It is an act of letting go that may take you a thousand times. But the process of softening your heart from the offenses of others is one we must all endure to become more like Christ. As a matter of fact, Matthew 5:44b tells us to "pray for those who persecute you." That is one of the hardest things for most people to do. It has become somewhat of a cliché to say "What would Jesus do?" But really, what would He do? Well, we know the answer to that is found at the foot of the cross. Is there someone in your life that you are finding it difficult to forgive? If so, spend some time thinking about what God says about forgiveness in these verses:

- \* We forgive because we have been forgiven by God (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13).
- \* We forgive in obedience to God (Matthew 6:14-15; Romans 12:18).
- \* We forgive others to gain control of our own emotions (Proverbs 12:16, James 1:19-20).
- \* We forgive so we won't become bitter towards others (Hebrews 12:14-15).

## **Conclusion**

The shelves in God's Home Store are always stocked full of the best gifts we can give to our church family members. When we surrender our oneness and unite as the body of Christ, we are creating a storefront display that showcases our great love for Him and flashes "Come on in, we are open" to all passersby. So be kind to unkind people - they need it the most. Be compassionate when you would be justified to show contempt. Seek to leave people better off for having met you. And do all these things for the glory of your Father in heaven.

"Spread love everywhere you go: first of all in your own home. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next door neighbor. Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting." - Mother Teresa

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40 NIV)