

It's September and that means for the past six months, the pandemic has forced us all to be socially distant and we don't have opportunities to physically visit or help friends who would benefit from our attention.

Recently I heard three different messages that helped me find ways to help others and still "play by the pandemic rules." Continue reading for more about these messages to decide if some also resonate with you for personal action.

First, I listened to the book "**29 Gifts: How a Month of Giving Can Change Your Life**", by Cami Walker. After a devastating MS diagnosis, Cami shares her inspirational journey in gratitude and generosity.

*At age thirty-five, Cami Walker was burdened by an intensified struggle with multiple sclerosis, a chronic neurological disease that left her debilitated and depressed. Then she received an uncommon "prescription" from South African healer Mbali Creazzo: Give away 29 gifts in 29 days. **29 Gifts** is the insightful story of the author's life change as she embraces and reflects on the naturally reciprocal process of giving. Many of Walker's gifts were simple--a phone call, spare change, a Kleenex. Yet the acts were transformative. By Day 29, not only had Walker's health and happiness improved, she also created a worldwide giving movement. **29 Gifts** shows how a simple, daily practice of altruism can dramatically alter your outlook on the world*

I was so inspired by her story that I decided to adopt the daily act of giving a gift to someone. I have it set on my phone as a 7:00 a.m. Daily Calendar reminder.

I'll be honest, somedays I make a conscious effort to give a physical gift to someone or plan to do something for someone. Other days, I go with the flow to look for opportunities. But each was done without feeling I needed to "check off" the day's gift. And I found the gifts to myself are the actual acts of giving to someone else. This has made me aware of my daily actions and reactions, less focused on what this pandemic has done to me and more on how I interact and treat others every day to make their life a little better.

The 2nd event that resonated with me was again as a result of listening to book. This time a historical fiction book, **A Lasting Impression** by Tamara Alexander set in post-Civil War Nashville. At the end of the book recording the author delivered a personal message: (paraphrased):

Over my life, I've learned only what we do for God will last. The lessons He taught us as we live are the ones we carry forever.

Who are you doing things for? I've determined to never forget it was for God.

She goes on to say:

All the mementos we save, things we bought along our life journey, letters and cards we saved or sent, etc. ...these are silent footprints we leave behind for those who follow. Hopefully they will last. These all create impressions of the person we are or were.

Never underestimate how other people look at your life or how many people you influence. We all leave lasting impressions (some good... some not so good.) May we live authentic lives of faith that point others to Christ. After all it's all about Him.

WOW! That's some powerful advice. I recently came across a beautiful white handkerchief with a hand embroidered letter "H". It had been my material grandmother's, Hattie. Born in 1890, widowed in 1917 (and pregnant with my mother), she was a woman who left a lasting impression on our whole family. She was a wonderful example of an authentic faith-filled-life that always pointed to Christ. I hope I will leave a small impression of the role model she was for me.

Will you leave silent footprints that create a lasting good impression?

The 3rd message in this theme came this past Sunday. Gail+ asked me to read the New Testament lesson in the Morning Prayer service. It was Romans 12:9-21. I've printed it below for you to read. The beginning "let love be genuine" does encapsulate all of the rest of the passage and is a good mantra to live by, as are all the other instructions Paul delivers in this message.

These three "messages", Cami Walker's "29 Gifts", Tamara Alexander's guidance to "live authentic lives of faith that point others to Christ" and then Paul's message to "let love be genuine" are each on their own powerful... but together...become something significant and actionable to wrap our life around. Think about it.

Peace....Sue

Romans 12:9-21

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.