

Devotion from the past ... 2007

Extended Reading: [Isaiah 43:1–7](#)

Gift Returns

“I want them back, every last one who bears my name, every man, woman, and child whom I created for my glory, yes, personally formed and made each one” (Isaiah 43:7 *The Message*).

Christmas purchases were calculated in the billions. And that’s just from one major league baseball team! Retail sales disappointed some businesses, but this was somewhat tempered by the price of live Christmas trees, which grew to as much as \$10–\$20 per foot in some places. And speaking of feet, consumer reports indicated that shoe sales were a few steps ahead of last year’s pace, though coat-sellers pocketed significantly less, due to warmer weather.

The Christmas sales rush ended several weeks ago, and the day-after-Christmas sales ended, well, the day after Christmas. By now, most of the return-the-unwanted-or-dysfunctional-gifts-rush is over too. Not being familiar with retail sales, I can only imagine the accounting and inventory nightmares involved. It’s reasonable to assume that most retailers would NEVER do an ad blitz actually asking people to bring back their gifts, which brings us to the actual devotional message herein.

The text reports God’s policy on gift returns. He wants them back! Every one of His homemade, personalized, and customized crafts—He wants them all.

He is talking about you and me.

When is the last time you considered yourself a gift? The pretty bows may be gone, and you may be well worn or perhaps you never came out of your box. You may view yourself as little more than a gaudy scarf or a hat two sizes too small. But, however you think, it doesn’t change God’s intentions for you.

You are God’s gift to the people you serve—family, students, youth, seniors, congregation members. You were made for them. You were made to be used. You were made to be returned to your Sender too.

Not that God’s gifts always understand their purpose. God directed Paul to write “The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him. In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we’re talking about is Christ’s body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn’t amount to much, would

we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't. If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face" (Romans 12:3–8 *The Message*).

Couldn't say it better myself. So I won't!

It's a new year. Have a blessed one. Serve Jesus in gladness and look forward to the day He will take you back. (See you in line!)

Written by Ed Grube
Director of Publications & Communications
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To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Phil. 4:20)