

# Faith, Hope and Love: Three Gifts That Keep Giving

“Let’s wrap up boxes and books and put them under the tree,” my mom said one night. I was six-years-old and didn’t think anything was odd about wrapping up books and empty boxes. I was excited about the idea of spending time with mom who was busy working from early in the morning as a farm laborer. Most of the time she was asleep when I got home from school.

My little brother and sister were excited about the brightly wrapped presents with shiny bows under the sparkling tinsel tree. I realized that the reason we wrapped those gifts is because she had no money to buy presents. I kept that secret until mom told us we would open our gifts after we came back from grandma and grandpa’s house.

Thinking back on that **Christmas**, she was trying to feed three kids on a farm laborer’s wage. I remember we had to stand in line with food stamps to buy groceries, which was really embarrassing. We had no presents that year from mom but in later years I gained three gifts that have proven priceless over and over again.

“Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13

**The gift of faith.** My grandpa picked us up that day. On the way to his house, a police car pulled up behind him with flashing lights. He didn’t understand why he was getting pulled over since he always drove under the speed limit. The policeman asked him how many children were in the car. He went back to his car and returned with an arm full of presents.

We weren’t Christians but I believed that my mom had faith that something good was going to happen that day despite the despair of trying to feed her children on farm laborer’s wages

and the shame of receiving welfare checks and food stamps. My mom became a Christian many years later but she always had this incredible optimism and faith in her.

The unexpected presents from an unexpected source are like the gifts that God brings everyday. We take these gifts for granted – the gift of a relationship, the gift of a job in a bad economy or the gift of a child's love. "Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see." Hebrews 11:1 We can carry God's faith into our holiday gatherings.

My mom taught me to live by faith and that lesson brought me unexpected scholarships that I didn't apply for to get into college.

**The gift of hope.** Fast forward many years and I'm college student paying my own way in Hawaii. I have no money to buy presents and my family lives in California. I pray and ask God for creative ideas for presents for my friends and family. I pray for each person that I want to give a gift to and suddenly I get an idea for writing a story about how that person reminds me of a character in the Bible.

Each person receives a story with pictures in a little booklet. Every person I gave that booklet to say that was the best gift they had ever received. Through those stories, I gave them the gift of hope. I gave the gift that they are becoming someone who Jesus intended to them to be. I stirred up the flame of destiny in them through the words on that page. The cost for that present was my time seeking the Lord on their behalf. We can give the gift of hope in this holiday season by being a vessel for Him to speak His words of life and hope to others.

**The gift of love.** My friend Faith calls me right before Christmas in 1998. I'm fighting depression after my mom died. I'm hopeless and this dark cloud sits over me. I have a

wonderful Christian husband, two beautiful little boys, a gorgeous home, and great job but can't enjoy any of it because of the depression. Faith says she wants to fly me from Columbia, MO. to West Palm Beach to go with her to some revival services.

Right after New Year's, I fly to West Palm Beach. Faith takes me to revival services at her church and I receive an incredible touch from God. That time prepares me for my visit to the Smithton Outpouring in February where I'm set free from depression. Hope and faith come back with the love of my friend. Faith gave me the gift of love that set me in the right direction at that time.

Demonstrate God's love during this holiday season. Love is the engine of faith and hope in action carrying His presence into the room. Call that person who needs His love. Or take them to lunch or dinner. Above all, take action. Don't let another Christmas pass by without reaching out to that person who has been on your heart.

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Give the gifts that keep giving after Christmas – the gift of faith, hope and love.

**Leilani Haywood** is the editor of *SpiritLed Woman* and a frequent contributor to *Charisma*. She is an award-winning writer who has been published in *The Kansas City Star*, *Focus on the Family*, *Metrovoice Newspaper* and many other publications.