

1 Cor 12

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Gifts – faith, hope, love

Living in Honduras teaches me so many things. I have learned a lot of Spanish, despite the 97 different verb tenses they have and the mile long vocabulary words. Their use of verbs to express concepts is often different too.

Hondurans distinguish between the verbs, *dar* – to give and *regalar* – to gift. For example, the Hondurans begin a prayer with “Thank you for **Gifting** us another day.” There are many attitudes that can be associated with the verb To Give. You can give begrudgingly – “Give your little brother one of your cookies.” Sometimes giving is a quid pro quo exercise. “I will give you this if you will give me that.” Sometimes we give out of obligation – a tiny fraction of our abundance. So often there is baggage or strings attached to giving. But to **Gift** is a different matter entirely. In verse 4 in today’s reading, the Greek translation of gift is “charisma” whose root is “grace.” Gifting is an act of grace and grace is an expression of love. Gifting has no strings attached, it expects nothing in return, and it comes with the attitude of **love**.

Little Alex at the Children’s Home graduated from kindergarten in June. We rescued him as a severely malnourished baby, weeks away from death. His very life is a miracle so you can imagine our joy when he donned his tiny graduation cap and gown. He was thrilled to receive a single graduation gift – a plastic airplane and truck with various transportation related accessories. As he was playing with his brand new toy, Pamm, a team member, walked by. He looked up and handed her several pieces of the set. “Here, this is for you!” Startled, Pamm thanked him and walked on. Twice later on she tried to return Alex’s new toys. Each time he shook his head. Finally he looked at her and said, “No, they are a **gift**.” He expected nothing in return. He just wanted to share his precious new toy with Pamm. He didn’t give out of abundance, he **gifted** out of **love**.

There is a 7th grader at our school in Flor del Campo. Andrea has cystic fibrosis. There is one doctor in all of Honduras who treats CF. Many of the most important medications are unavailable and the others are too expensive for her mother, Reyna, to afford. Through the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit, 2 team members from 2 different states have made contact with the CF community in the US and one of the major drug companies. They have each come to Honduras laden with these life-saving medications and crucial medical equipment to help Andrea breathe. Can you imagine Reyna and Andrea’s joy when they learned their prayers had been answered? Can you imagine Reyna’s **relief** as they unpacked the meds that her only child so desperately needs? In her joy, Reyna thanked the team members and all those who provided these gifts. She explained what a miracle it is for them...**and the other CF families** in Honduras because she shares these meds with the other families. If it were my child, I would hoard these life-saving meds, but Reyna **gifts** them -- not out of abundance but out of **love**.

Another interesting verb is *esperar*. *Esperar* means both To Wait and To Hope. A few years ago, I was talking to a Honduran pastor. I was overwhelmed by the extreme poverty and all that goes along with it. I asked him, “The poor here suffer so tremendously and there is no end in sight. Yet, they have such a profound faith. How does that happen?” Immediately he replied, “It is because we set our sights on the next life.” The poor in Honduras know that this life is less than a blink of an eye in the context of eternity. They live in a state of **hopeful** waiting for the next life.

There is a terrible shack built into a cliff on the way to the Children's Home. It is made of random scraps of wood, cardboard, and tin. I have passed it nearly every day for years. One day, after quite a bit of nudging from the Holy Spirit, I stopped with a team to deliver food for whoever lived there. A tiny little woman came hesitantly out of the house and looked at me, mystified. I said, "We brought food for your family!" She looked up and said, "Gracias, Papa!" She then went on to say that they had had no breakfast. Her family of 6 had **no** food at all. Her immediate reaction was to thank the source of the food. She had prayed and waited **hopefully** that God would **hear** her prayers. He did. We were simply the channel He used to **answer** them.

Jimmy came to us, battered and malnourished, at 3. One day I saw him at our school where he does volunteer work. He is 19 now. He was doing his university homework, playing very complex classical music on his guitar. His fingers were flying over the strings as he changed chords and picked a sophisticated pattern. I asked him how growing up at the Children's Home changed his life. "Suzy came and gave us the possibility to dream and the possibility of having a better life. There is a lot of Christian influence at the Children's Home. They teach us that our lives have a lot of value. It changed the way I dream. My hope for the future is more than a degree from university. More than that, it is to influence society positively. More than changing **my** life, it is changing the lives of others in a positive way. I want to give a future to kids who don't have one now." LAMB has **gifted** Jimmy hope...and now he plans to gift **hope** to others.

The verb *creer* means To Believe. I really began to understand the power of that verb when I saw 200 school children on the 3rd floor open air soccer court at our school -- children who come from one of the poorest neighborhoods in Tegucigalpa, who come from disintegrated families, most of whom experience domestic violence, gang violence, or drug addiction; children who had never heard about Jesus or that they are His beloved children. And there they were, singing, "I believe in you, Jesus, and what you are doing in me." They lifted their small voices and their message of faith wafted out over their hurting and broken community.

Faith is what takes a teenager who had been trafficked by her own family and transforms her into a new person, one who follows the Risen Lord and is now one of the 6% of Hondurans who go to university. She wants to be an attorney to defend the helpless.

Hondurans put their **complete** trust in God. It is their faith that sustains them and it is their **profound** faith that inspires the visiting teams and sends them home full of the Holy Spirit.

To Hondurans, **Gift** is a verb. It **is** the most excellent way – it is Gifting their faith, hope, and love.