

Bribe or Blessing...  
A View from the Dog House  
November 20, 2014

Most husbands (and not just a few wives) know what it is to be in the doghouse...something happened, words were exchanged, tempers flared and someone (if not both) were on the outs! It's happened in our house...and I suspect it will happen again.

Anybody who has seen the view of life (and relationships) from the doghouse knows that, often what is helpful, is a gift to make up for the wrong that was done. Flowers brought home at the end of the day, a card left on the dresser in the morning, a phone call at just the right moment are often things done to help express apologies.

However, I was reminded while reading Miroslav Volf (*Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*) that giving gifts, just to get out of the doghouse is really only a heightened form of bribery. Gifts are an opportunity to express remorse and repentance – recognizing the wrong that was done and expressing genuine regret.

Without a genuine expression of heartfelt repentance, my gifts simply become bribery to get me out of trouble – to get me to move from the doghouse to indoors (if not off the couch and back into bed)! But the purer heart and the better motive is to give a gift that expresses a genuine sorrow and a commitment to not do the thing that put us into the doghouse again!

A gift given with the genuine heart and a passionate commitment to honor your loved one becomes a source of blessing and joy (for them and for you)!

Without repentance, the greatest, most expensive, most expansive gift is simply a bribe. With repentance and remorse, the smallest gesture, the kindest word, the smallest of gestures becomes fraught with meaning, value, love and support.

I'm not in the doghouse today...and I hope that I will give gifts to my wife (and my friends) that communicate that I am genuinely valuing them and reflecting my commitment to not hurt them in the future. I am hopeful that I will remember that...even when I am looking in from the doghouse.

I hope that instead of bribing your loved ones, you impart to them real blessings from your heart today!