

## The Gift

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As is the case with many families, my children have grown up playing sports, particularly [soccer](#). Like millions of other children across the country, my youngest son, David, and daughter, Deborah, began playing on AYSO (American Youth Soccer Organization) teams. Soccer played by 5- and 6-year-olds is more about the experience than it is about the sport. Our children learned to win, lose and be a part of a team. It was all about having fun.

After a few years, they both moved up to club teams. For the uninitiated, club-level teams can be very competitive. The coaches are professionals (versus volunteer coaches in AYSO) and the season lasts all year long.

For Deborah, club soccer is a way to stay in shape and develop as a soccer player. But for her and most of her team, it is all about the relationships. Most of Deborah's best friends are also her teammates. They train, sweat, succeed and fail together through the hot sun and the pouring rain.

For David, it's his passion. He works hard, practices at home and even plays soccer video games. He has a few close friends on the team, but for him, it is about the love he has for the sport.

Toward the middle of last year, David was recruited by one of the premier soccer academies in the country. This was not something we were hoping for or even knew about; it just happened and was actually somewhat startling.

David's playing for a soccer academy necessitated some family introspection. David clearly has a gift, which, combined with a lot of hard work, has led him to a place only a small percentage of 12-year-olds reach.

David and I talked shortly after he was accepted onto the academy team. We both recognized that some miraculous doors have opened for him to an opportunity few enjoy. David has a gift, but with that gift comes accountability.

To be accountable to his gift, David practices with the team at least three evenings a week. He sometimes gets home so exhausted that he heads straight to bed with his homework waiting for him at 5 a.m. the next morning. On the other days, David works on his speed and ball control at home, sometimes with his sister and sometimes on his own. Needless to say, there are a lot of typical activities that David doesn't get to participate in.

There's no telling where David's gift (and hard work) will take him. He could be a great soccer professional or he could play in college and graduate to a "real job." But even with an unknown future, one thing is still required: David must be accountable each day to the special ability God has given him.

David is not the only one with gifts. Each of us has gifts that have a purpose. As a doctor of chiropractic, you have the [gift of healing](#). You can not only provide healing with your adjustments; you can also place your patients on the wellness path by helping them understand the nature of health, and how that must be reflected in their lifestyles. They too are accountable.

In addition to being a DC, you likely have other gifts; things you do particularly well that have a purpose in your community. Resources are a gift. The ability to donate money to important projects or help meet the needs of others lets us take advantage of important opportunities to be accountable to the resources we have been given.

Giving money to a homeless person may be part of how you exercise your gift of resources. Most of us easily waste \$5 or more every day on trivial things like coffee or snacks we shouldn't be eating anyway. But that same \$5 can be the difference between how a homeless person spends the next day (or even several days) - hungry or satisfied.

Time is a gift we all have. Just recently, I saw the movie "Groundhog Day." While I have seen it a number of times before, it was a good reminder of the importance of spending the time we have been given correctly. If you haven't seen it (or it was too long ago to remember), Bill Murray's character spends most of the movie reliving the same day (Groundhog Day) in a small town in Pennsylvania. Each time he relives the day, he has a new opportunity to do it better.

Initially, he sees repeating the same day as an opportunity for self-gratification without any consequences. But eventually he recognizes that the best way to fill this day is by doing everything he can to serve the people around him; people he didn't notice or even acknowledge at the beginning. Only after he lives the day to his fullest is he satisfied with his efforts and subsequently allowed to move forward to the rest of his life.

I believe with all of my heart that each of us is accountable for the gifts we have been given. How we use those gifts, spend our money and live our lives matters more than we realize. I believe we will ultimately stand before God to give an account of what we did with the time, money, abilities and opportunities given to us.

I wish I could say that I am doing everything I can with what I've been given. I know I'm not. But like my son David, the effort is there.

As we begin the third month of 2012, it may be a good time to take stock of what we are doing with our gifts and how we can better utilize them. This can be a time to assess the needs of those around us and see what opportunities we have to help address those needs.

While much harder to give, our time is really the most valuable. Taking time to love, encourage, mentor and teach is far more valuable than money. How that fits into our daily routine is another issue. But I am convinced that, like Bill Murray's character, when we live each day to the fullest, it will yield rewards that make the extra effort and the sacrifices well worth it.

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