

“THANKMAS – THE GIFT OF YOU”



“The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone.”—Harriett Beecher Stowe

The time between Thanksgiving and Christmas brings out the best in us. I'd love to bottle that goodwill and be able to sprinkle it throughout the rest of the year.

Traditionally, Thanksgiving and Christmas were the two holidays when we tried to gather all of our family. But as our children grew, as

grandchildren popped up, it became not only more expensive but more difficult to get the entire family together. Now, we try to find at least one three day weekend of the year that we can bring everyone together. But usually it's not for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

A friend of mind, Lee Brower, introduced me to the concept of ThankMas. That's what he calls bringing the family together...it may be between Thanksgiving and Christmas but more likely it will be between Christmas and Thanksgiving, particularly during that wonderful space of family vacation time we call summer. Whenever it happens magic occurs and I now call it Thankmas.

I've come up with some simple but extremely powerful set of exercises and conversation tools you can use to make your Thankmas gatherings even more meaningful and memorable. But before I introduce you to all of those priceless opportunities, I'm going to offer something you can do any day of the year. It will take between 15 and 30 minutes. Once completed it's easy to share. I call it the *Gift of You* and you can make this gift to your spouse, significant other, child, grandchild, sibling, parent, or even to a best friend or mentor.

The *Gift of You* is a wonderful way to avoid the sadness captured in the words of Harriett Beecher Stowe about leaving things unsaid or undone. We don't understand how much children, grandchildren, siblings, spouse and even significant others hunger for affirmation. They want to know they mattered in our lives. This exercise captures heartfelt expressions of your love, reflections of how much you've treasured time spent together, and insights into what you value and appreciate about the uniqueness and giftedness of this very important person in your life.

KEY POINTS BEFORE WE GET STARTED

- **You can choose to type or write out your answers to the questions in the ThankMas – The Gift of You or you may dictate those reflections.**

- You can also have someone interview you, asking each of the questions you want to reflect on. Or you can do this exercise solo.
- Once you've completed the exercise, create a special opportunity, maybe it will be a ThankMas gathering or maybe it will be a special afternoon to spend with the person with whom you will be sharing The Gift of You.
- If you record your reflections be sure you preserve that recording. You may want to burn it to a DVD in addition to creating an electronic file you can easily store. You might consider giving the DVD to this very special person in your life as their birthday or Christmas gift.



"The great art of giving consists in this: the gift should cost very little and yet be greatly coveted, so that it may be the more highly appreciated." - Baltasar Gracian

STEP ONE OF THE "THANKMAS – THE GIFT OF YOU" VISIONING EXERCISE:

- **Decide who you want to focus on for this Gift of You Exercise. Please read the questions on this and the following pages, placing a ○ next to each question you would like to reflect on and answer. If have no interest in a question, draw a line through it. Now go back to each ○ and pick at least three and no more than five of those questions.**
- **With each question you circled, take a few moments to reflect on what experiences, memories, and emotions surface. Don't try to create a detailed outline. Just jot down notes to remind you of the emotions and reflections which flowed as you considered this question.**
- **Now you are ready to start writing or dictating your reflections to each question. Don't be in a rush. Be open to new thoughts/emotions flowing.**



- **WHAT SPECIAL MOMENTS OF JOY HAS YOUR LOVED ONE BROUGHT INTO YOUR LIFE?**

- **WHEN YOU WITNESSED YOUR LOVED ONE ACHIEVE A MILESTONE IN THEIR LIFE PATH, OR OVERCOME A DIFFICULT CHALLENGE, WHAT DID YOU FEEL AND WHAT HOPE OR WONDER DID THAT LEAVE YOU WITH IN TERMS OF WHAT AMAZING THINGS YOU FELT HE/SHE MIGHT ACCOMPLISH LATER IN LIFE?**

- **WHAT ARE THE TALENTS OR STRENGTHS WHICH MAKES YOUR LOVED ONE SO EXCEPTIONAL?**

- **IF YOU WERE GIVEN “COSMIC PERMISSION” TO ASSIMILATE ONE OF THOSE GIFTS OR SPECIAL SKILLS INTO YOUR OWN LIFE, WHICH WOULD IT BE AND WHY?**

- **DID YOU EVER MARVEL AT THE RESOLVE, THE PERSISTENCE OR CREATIVITY OF YOUR LOVED ONE AND KNEW THIS WOULD SERVE THEM WELL IN LIFE?**

- **DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU WERE AMAZED AT YOUR LOVED ONE'S GENEROSITY OR COMPASSION?**

- **DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE MEMORY OF A TRIP OR VACATION WITH YOUR LOVED ONE?**



- **PRETEND FOR A MOMENT A GENIE PROMISED YOU THAT IF YOU LEFT A MESSAGE TO YOUR LOVED ONE IN A BOTTLE IT WOULD SOMEDAY WASH UP ON A BEACH IN FRONT OF YOUR LOVED ONE AT A DIFFICULT TIME IN THEIR LIFE. IF YOU COULD PUT 50 WORDS OR LESS IN THAT BOTTLE DESCRIBING THE LOVE YOU FEEL FOR YOUR LOVED ONE, AND IN ANOTHER 50 WORDS PROVIDE YOUR LOVED ONE WITH MUCH NEEDED ENCOURAGEMENT AND A REMINDER OF HOW MUCH HE/SHE WAS LOVED—WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

- **WHAT IS THE KINDEST OR MOST THOUGHTFUL GIFT OR DEED YOUR LOVED ONE EVER MADE OR DID FOR YOU?**

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO EXPRESS YOUR LOVE OR YOUR HOPES AND DREAMS FOR HOW WHAT YOU PASS ON TO YOUR LOVED ONE WILL POSITIVELY IMPACT THEIR LIFE?

FINAL STEP: Now that you've completed your Gift of Love think about when you want to share it with your loved one. How can you make that a special occasion? And, now that you realize how powerful and easy this exercise is, what other loved ones can you create a Gift of Love for?