

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

How do I learn to graciously accept a gift? My heart is so full. I cannot contain myself. Right now I'm driving from Lake Martin to Birmingham for a book signing. I know it's dangerous to be writing and steering at the same time, but I need to work this fullness out and the best way for me to do this is to write to you, Pilgrim.

In four days we'll be having the official campaign kickoff for my husband's race for governor. Before all of this starts, I wanted to have the "Marthas" and "Marys" in place. The Marthas will be my traveling companions, and the Marys will be lifting our family up in prayer.

What has been incredibly humbling is that with each phone call made, I've received an incredible enthusiastic "Yes." Words like "I'm honored to be asked," "I'm thrilled," "What else can I do?" have been the typical responses. It's almost too much to take in. It's so hard for me to accept this outpouring of support and encouragement. For you see, that's always been my job. I'm usually the supporter, the encourager, the cheerleader. And today it's come to my attention that I'm pitifully poor at this role reversal I'm experiencing.

It wasn't so hard asking for help on the phone and receiving the "yes" gifts. I'd hang up and quickly say, "Thank You, Lord," and move on to the next name. These gifts weren't

too heady or too heavy. I guess the reason was I wasn't actually getting to see the people or getting to hug or kiss them. There was no eye contact or smile. I couldn't actually see the weightiness of these weightless, stringless gifts. Their "unstringiness" was a result of there being no ulterior motives attached. I was receiving free will gifts over and over again.

As I said, I could check their names off, put them on a 3 x 5 card, pair them with a prayer partner, and move on. I could handle this. It was OK. As I went to bed last night, I'd almost completed the task. I had six more of the 62 "Marys" to contact. My eyes were more on me and my mission instead of them and their gifts, so the overwhelmingness still hadn't sunk in until this drive. I was just getting a job done and "good night."

Then I awakened this morning to another stringless gift. I called the headquarters and Cathy answered the phone. She's a full time volunteer five days a week. She's daily giving us unconditionally the stringless gift of her time, her talents, her support, her encouragement.

She asked if I'd hold on for a minute, for she needed to go turn off the water. She returned and said she was washing the dishes. Laughingly, she said it seemed that no one else seemed to think it was their job to do, so she'd taken it on. I could tell in her laughter and tone of voice that she did this job with joy instead of martyrdom. How wonderful! She has a husband. She has a daughter. She has a grand life and she's giving us eight hours a day - free.

With our family's world going so fast and furious, there are going to be a lot of areas of my life in which I'm going to need help. Another example: my dear friend Madeliene just two days ago offered to be my shopper and go get stockings and toothpaste and other necessities over the next months - another gracious, stringless offer! I know these people aren't political cronies who'll want paybacks. These are Christian brothers and sisters who believe in the cause. They want to help. It is awesomely awesome and humbling.

If I can't graciously accept the stringless gifts from 62 Marys and numerous traveling Marthas; if I can't accept the stringless gift of dishwashing volunteer time given by Cathy; if I can't accept the stringless shopping aid from Madeliene, then how can I accept the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Often as Christians we are asked, "Have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?" That question used to make me feel really uncomfortable and nervous. It was so personal, as well it should be.

I'd feel that in the very questioning the negative was implied. I'd quickly say "yes" and move on, hopefully to another question.

I think again it was the same old problem of my being unable to graciously accept a gift. In this case, it was the Ultimate Gift from the Ultimate Giver. Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. I do love Him and I know He knows that, but as

for me being able to totally comprehend, totally understand, totally accept this Gift - His Gift - well, for me that's a daily surrendering, a daily openness which I have to work on and strive for continually. I have to constantly say to myself, "He loves me." "He loves me." "He loves me." It's an unconditional non-dependent "Love Gift." I can't buy it. I can't earn it. I can't deserve it. I can only accept it and respond to it. He died for me. He died for you. He died for me and you, Pilgrim, so that we could be in relationship with Him. Wow! Big time Wow! That's so unfathomably big that I have to daily let go into Him so that I can try to comprehend His gift a little deeper. I've got a long way to go, longer than I'd realized. That was once again prominently pointed out to me by the Marthas and Marys and Cathy and Madeliene. Thank you, ladies.

Pilgrim, are you graciously able to accept gifts, stringless gifts? What about that Ultimate Gift? Pilgrim, do you have a few areas in your life where you haven't totally surrendered to Him and allowed Him to take complete charge? Boy, I do, but I'm working on it with a little help from the Helper, the Holy Spirit, and my friends.

Peace. I have arrived safely at the Lamb's Ears store. What a great name. Thank You, Lord, and thank you ladies for all those stringless gifts.

Love,

Lucy

P.S. The book signing was really enjoyable. I could not get over the effort put in on the planning and preparation - the invitations sent, the food and drink prepared. It was a lovely, warm reception. Thank you, ladies. I know that warm glow of a special time will linger with me during these next fast-paced days.

Besides this unexpected holiday greeting, I want to remember the young mama who came with her child. She was beautiful. She had tears in her eyes as she quietly told me how much the first book had meant to her. As I autographed another, I could hear her tears continue. I really didn't make eye contact. I listened lightly. I really felt uncomfortable. I was a little embarrassed. I didn't know what to do.

If you'll notice, every one of those last sentences began with that awful "I." Once again, the "I" part of me was so in the way and in control that the Christ in me could not minister. Once again, I was unable to totally accept this stringless gift and just humbly receive and say, "Thank you, thank you, thank you."

*With a growing grateful heart,
I am your sister in Christ,
Lucy*