

The Gift

by Jeff Mitchell (2012)

While Jeff & his wife were on sabbatical in Ethiopia, they met the guardian of the Ark (of the Covenant) in Axum. Tradition has it that Solomon sent the Ark to his son with Queen of Sheba for safekeeping. The guardian invited him to the holy mountain of Debre Damo. The monastery is located high on a plateau that can only be reached by climbing an 80-foot rope.

A monk reads him a story from the book of Zadok. Zadok was the priest to David & Solomon. On his deathbed David gave his son a gift. **It was a silk purse that came from Abraham. In it were two frames, one with a window & one a mirror.** One to see ourselves (evaluate our motives) & the other to see others (how might we serve God & others). The window also allows us to see the presence of God & the blessings of others. Reflecting on ourselves we should not only see the positive, but also the negative.

In order to be wise, we must seek God daily. Use the mirror to find the root of our problems. Seek the truth & be willing to change to be more like God. The monks pray that all people will come to know themselves, share their lives with their neighbors, & love God with all your hearts. We must balance meditation & service. Our relationship with God is sustained by God's willingness to show mercy & grant forgiveness. God longs for a deep friendship with us.

When a man asked Solomon: "why God allows the injustice of homeless?" His replied was: "God does care. He sent you. What did you do for them?" Solomon, like most wealthy people, began to believe that his own intellect was the reason for his success. True change occurs when we replace bad habits with good.

God is always waiting for us like a mother for a wayward child. When outward appearance exceeds inward disposition, life falls apart. I should be able to hold a mirror, look into my eyes & smile. God is not punishing us when we have trials, but transforming us. Misunderstanding comes from inadequate listening. Everyone wants to feel like they are being heard.

The 7 pillars of wisdom: make peace with who you are; yield to the way of change; allow failure & difficulty to teach you; open your ears; be obedient; love others by giving wisdom away; know the difference between the giver & the gift.

Quotes:

"Realize your need for God, & let God bring the change to your life." "It amazes me how willing I am to settle for the false security and the empty power of my shallow self". (JM)

"Why is it so easy to detect in others what I find so difficult to see in myself?" "Why do I squander hope, opportunity & blessing?" "Wisdom is not what we know – it is what we do with what we know."