

Our "Gifts"... by Lorelei Pepe

I enjoy watching music shows and one of my favorites is "American Idol". I am a big fan and enjoy seeing the transformation of many of the young people becoming real stars. It is also a wonderful opportunity for these young people to showcase their talent. Some are natural born singers and others are self-taught but the chosen ones are usually very "gifted".

One sweet young man I was impressed with is named Christian G. He is a 20-something nice, young Italian guy from Long Island. He had a sweet disposition, a humble soul and an amazing voice, which I feel was a gift from God. His demeanor was one of gratitude and he always thanked all the judges profusely at the end of his performance. Even Katy Perry, a notable singer in her own right, was brought to tears a few times as well as myself. When Christian sang the song "Imagine" by the Beatles he truly gave it new meaning. He yearns for a better world for us all. I think because he had such a rough beginning since he was a baby, he struggled with failing eyesight and was told he may ultimately go blind. From the age of 3 until a young teen he had this fear weighing on him like a ton of bricks. But, at the age of 13, a procedure was done, and corrected and restored most of his sight. With the help of glasses, he can manage.

Christian is very grateful for life and his family as he learned at a young age what suffering was about. I believe God gave him this gift of singing so he could have a joyful life, but also that he could be a messenger and bring hope to others with similar conditions.

This reminds me of Paul, the apostle who wrote many encouraging letters to non-believers of Jesus. He explained in his writings that our relationship with God, is a gift of grace, not earned by works. When we place our faith in Jesus, we can find our real, true selves, and value our own self-worth. Because Jesus died for us on the cross he saved us all and took our sin. We may not realize this, but we believers are all God's children and in a sense he gave us an "inheritance" before we were even put on this earth. We can all fulfill our destiny by serving him in our own ways. Whether small or big, Jesus sees it all. He loved us first and will always be our "father".

I get very annoyed when I hear people tell me how lucky I am that I am an artist and writer and exclaim they have "no" gifts! I believe each and every one of us has a gift. That is why we were put on this earth to find them and utilize them for God's glory. Sometimes it takes a whole lifetime to realize who you are and what your purpose is. Some people never discover it and just stumble through life. But I believe if we worship and serve our God and pray, we will be rewarded. Maybe not here on earth, but in heaven. I think we need to strive to be the best version of ourselves. Life is very fragile and short.

If you just spent time praying with a "stranger" or helping your neighbors out with a meal, or being a caregiver, these are Godly gifts. It is the little things that count and we may not think so at the time but as it says in Galatians in the Bible, the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, faithfulness, goodness and more. Read Galatians 5:22-23 to discover them all. These are gifts from God and if we live in the spirit, we will walk in the spirit of the Lord! Know that each and every one of us has a gift from God. You just have to take the time to discover it! God is good and I am grateful.