

A GIFT OF LIFE AND LOVE

By Brad Allred

My mother's gift showed us the true meaning of Christmas.

My uncle Ed has always had an infectious love of life. Unfortunately, he also had a deficient pair of kidneys. For several years, Ed had been staving off kidney failure through dialysis. The treatments were painful and frequent. Each treatment wiped him out until the next one, and by the fall of 1995, he seemed to be just a shell of his former vibrant self.

The doctor finally told Ed that if he didn't get a new kidney soon, his body wouldn't hold out much longer. Although only one kidney is necessary to sustain life, Ed didn't want to

ask anyone to donate one of theirs due to the risk that inherently accompanies any surgery. But there was no choice. Several close friends and family members were tested to see if their kidneys were compatible. Only one perfect match was found: Ed's sister, Dottie—my mother.

On December 7, many of Ed's friends and family joined in fasting and prayer in behalf of him and Dottie. The surgeons who performed the operation were twin brothers. Even more interesting, one of them had donated a kidney to the other.

Ed and my mother were impressed to learn that with each surgery, these two doctors did all that they could and then bowed their heads and left the outcome in the Lord's hands.

On the day of the operation, one doctor removed one of my mother's kidneys. As he sewed her back up, his brother carefully secured the donated kidney inside Ed's abdomen.

The surgery was a success, but it remained to be seen if Ed's body would accept the new kidney. The antibodies in his immune system were suppressed to improve his chances, so Ed had to be isolated in intensive care to protect him from viruses.

Even after he was released, he had to remain isolated from everyone except his immediate family. On Christmas Eve, however, Ed received special permission to attend my grandparents' annual Christmas Eve celebration.

Wearing a face mask, Ed walked in the door, headed straight for Dottie, and enveloped her in a tremendous hug. As they embraced each other, there wasn't a dry eye in the house. Everyone could feel the love emanating from them. A sister had suffered in order to give her brother the gift of



"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

John 3:16-17



life. It was a gift of love, a gift of sacrifice, a gift he couldn't provide for himself.

As I watched them, with tears streaming down my face, it dawned on me: this could be what it will be like to meet the Savior face to face. He did something for us that we are unable to do for ourselves. Only He, being divine, was able to endure a sacrifice so great that the law of justice would be satisfied. And only He, being perfect, was worthy to atone for the sins of all mankind so that the law of mercy could be extended to all who accept Him as their Savior.

As I savored these insights, I recommitted myself to do all I could to show my appreciation for the Savior and His sacrifice. I would strive to live my life as a disciple so that someday I might be worthy to enter His presence, embrace Him, and personally thank Him for loving me enough to make such a sacrifice. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

SHARING GIFTS

What does the Lord's loving sacrifice mean to you?

Who could benefit from a gift of the Savior's love?

With whom could you share the gospel, offer a message of hope, or share the joy of the season?