

Empty Boxes

Evening has come and the noises of excited children opening their presents have faded, as has the sweet aroma of Christmas dinner that had earlier filled the air. The dishes are now washed and back in the cupboards from whence they came, and all the leftovers have been sent home with family members or have been stuffed into the refrigerator. Beautiful gifts that had been covered in bright-colored paper and laid neatly under the tree have been put away. All that remains are empty boxes that have been scattered throughout the room, many of which are missing their counterparts or have been severely torn. After a few moments of standing and staring at the chaotic mess you slowly begin to gather up the empty boxes, separating them as you go. It's kind of sad when you think about it. Just a few hours before those boxes meant the world to those receiving them, and then once the contents inside were emptied out they were no longer needed and thus tossed aside. Many of those boxes, as they were being unwrapped, were torn apart. Others were trampled upon and crushed. Some were simply separated. They are no longer useful and will thus be thrown away or burned. Only those boxes that have been gently and carefully treated will be saved and used again to bring joy to those who receive them.

Tragically, many souls are treated much the same way as are boxes. They enter this life as a precious gift, and they bring great joy to those who receive them. But unfortunately, over time, some are abused, mistreated, separated, and tossed aside. What's left, many times, is a heart that feels unloved, broken, empty, and no longer useful.

It is imperative that we, God's people, treat others with tender loving care. We must not be abusive, divisive, neglectful, or unconcerned. We must love one another as Christ loved us **(John 13:34-35)**! May we all remember that the content within each and every box is a precious soul that Jesus died for **(John 3:16)**.

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