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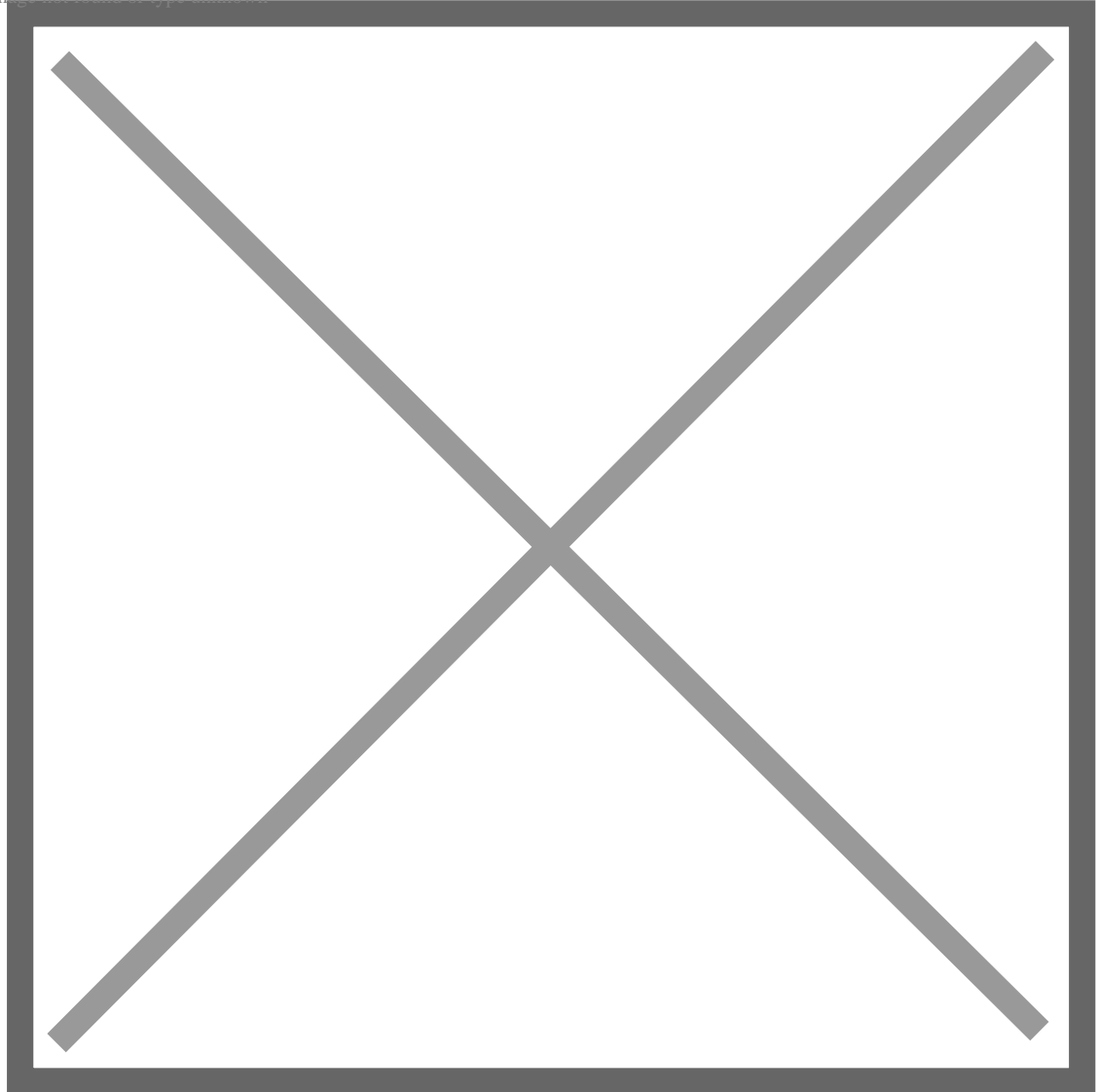
GOSPEL PEARLS

The gifts we receive are undeserved

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Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. "Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity — greedy, dishonest, adulterous — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18: 9-14)

What various forms of prayer (of petition, praise, thanksgiving, intercession) have in common is the recognition of God's perfect goodness and His unattainable unfathomable superiority. Therefore, we must pray to mercifully share the material and spiritual gifts that God has given us with those who are temporarily less fortunate than

us. We must return our God-given talents with greater abundance than we originally and undeservedly received from Him. So let us never become proud of our own strengths and gifts.