

# The most valuable gift essay sample

Life



It only takes a few seconds to realize how under-appreciated the gift of life really is. I can still remember the exact moment in which I began to understand that life is the most valuable gift that I have ever been given. Never again since that moment have I forgotten how quickly that gift can be taken away. A few seconds earlier or later, a few inches left or right, or maybe just a little less luck could have changed what turned out to be a life-altering experience into a life-ending disaster.

It was July 21, 1999, and it was a seasonably warm summer day in the small town Ettlingen, Germany. Nothing led me to believe it would be anything other than a normal day, except for the fact that it happened to be my favorite cousin's birthday. I was on my way to the store to finish up some last minute arrangements in preparation for a small surprise party that we would be throwing later. There was one more stop, and I would be heading home to get ready for cake and ice cream with friends and family.

By the looks of things, there were not many people out, and there were very few cars moving around town. Other than the cars parked along the sides of the road, it was as if I had the roads to myself. I had been driving for a little over five months, and I had taken these same roads countless numbers of times without incident. I was about to find out, though, that this time would be different.

As I was driving along with the top of my mom's wrangler jeep partially off and the radio playing, I noticed a car coming in the other direction. I was approaching the intersection of a small side street as the oncoming car slowed to turn. Whether the driver did not see me, whether his judgment

was off, or whether he just did not care, I will never really know, but he suddenly turned left in front of me.

The only thing that I know for certain is that, in the next few moments, I realized just how much I had been taking for granted. In the seconds to follow all of the stories that I had heard of time slowing to a crawl and of one's life flashing before his eyes during an accident came true. A feeling of pure terror overwhelmed me as I slammed on my brakes hoping to be able to stop. The other oncoming traffic and parked cars made swerving out of the way an impossibility, so I was forced to go straight ahead.

Unfortunately, there was not enough time or distance between us for me to stop, and we collided.

If you have never been involved in or near a car collision, believe me when I tell you that it is an awful combination of sounds to hear. Squealing tires and blowing horns are followed by a bone-jarring jolt as metal grates, bends, and tears under the stress of the impact. Glass and plastic shatter to tiny pieces as windows, windshields, and headlights fracture from pressure and warping. Those sounds assaulted my senses as I hoped and prayed that somehow I would make it through the entire calamity without any major injuries.

Finally, my jeep came to a complete stop, and I was flung violently forward. Although the entire collision may have taken a total of ten seconds, it felt as if a lifetime had passed within that time. The front end of my jeep had hit the other car directly in the passenger side door. My hood had crumpled to almost half of its original depth, and the tires were rubbing the insides of the wheel wells to the point that they would not turn. The dashboard had been

pushed back into the driving compartment slamming into my knees, and the windshield had shattered. The other car had practically wrapped itself around the front of my jeep like a glove. Luckily, I was alone and had been wearing my seatbelt. Without it, I would have surely been catapulted through the shattered windshield on impact. As it was, I had only slightly hit my head on the steering wheel and bruised my shoulder from the belt strap.

Things began to settle down a bit, and I could hear footsteps over the steady hum of my horn as people approached to see if everyone was all right. I took a few seconds to gather myself, and I realized that, other than soreness and some bruises, I was otherwise fine.

After checking on the occupants of the other car, I started looking for a way to call the police. About one hundred feet away was a pay phone on the corner. Finding out that nobody had already done so, I walked over the phone to report the accident. After what seemed like hours, the police finally arrived and began taking statements. Tow trucks were called to clear away the wreckage since neither vehicle was going anywhere on its own.

The other driver was cited for the accident and walked home, which was just right down the street. I accepted the officer's offer to drive me home and sat quietly the entire trip. I had to figure out some way to tell my mother that our car had just been totaled. What a horrible day it had turned out to be.

During the wait for the police and the drive home, I had plenty of time to look back and replay the incident over and over in my head. Although everyone had made it through the accident with minimal injuries, I hadn't made it through unchanged. I realized then and there how much I had taken

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life for granted. I had come to expect to live a long life in which I would have time to slow down and appreciate life's little miracles. It only took a few seconds to see that there may not be time later in life to slow down. At any moment in time you may only be seconds away from dying. I feel that I have been blessed to realize this fact at such a young age.