

4 Gifts All Believers Should Want for Christmas

I broke the rules.

I asked overly self-conscious Orange County men and women to stand in the middle of a church service if they had *never* heard the words “I love you” or “I am proud of you” from their father. A good 10 seconds passed before one brave man stood and then several more women and men joined him. The keyboard player began to play some comforting chords which infused this moment of freedom and healing with a gentle and safe spirit.

Like a breaker rolling onto the Laguna Beach shoreline, it came from the back to the front. A wave of people began to rise up out of their seats. Some were weeping, some were holding their spouse’s hand, and others stood alone. The pure shock and awe of people letting their defenses down and making themselves vulnerable, in a public way, was powerful.

This burning bush moment began 40 minutes earlier with a few well-placed matches that I knew would kindle a great fire in the hearts and souls of many when I said: “I think all of us can agree that, for better or for worse, fathers leave an emotional fingerprint in our lives. I think that we can also agree that the love of a father can be transforming.

And guess what? We don’t grow out of our desire to be daddy’s ‘Big Man’ or ‘Little Princess.’ You and I are created to be the special object of a father’s love.” I then methodically blew on that ember with a steady wind of spiritual truth that transformed into—spiritually and emotionally speaking—a signature Southern California wildfire.

By the end, hundreds of grown men and women were consumed by God’s desire for them. They were now standing to renew or receive the blessing of their Father’s love. By standing they

were saying that they wanted to resolve the acceptance issue once and for all. They were saying that they wanted to end their quest for validation as men and women in unhealthy and destructive ways. They came to their feet in order to experience healing from that deep fear in all of our souls of not being personally affirmed by someone significant in our lives.

They wanted exactly what God modeled for all of us. Observe closely:

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’” (Matt. 3:16-17, NIV).

Here are four things every man, woman and child wants for Christmas:

1. A special moment from the Father. The Scripture says, “At that moment, heaven was opened and he [Jesus] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him” (Matt. 3:16). Think spotlight. Every man, woman, and child deeply craves a father’s special love. God modeled this need and this pattern for all of us.

2. A special name from the Father. Have you ever heard that phrase, “They’re trying to make a name for themselves?” Men, women and children *all* want to be identified as a loved son or daughter first on the journey of life. If that is not there, they will begin a quest to find a name. They will find an identity that bestows a name. They will connect to groups or communities that bestow names—gangs, social networks, professional titles or lifestyles that provide a label. The one they crave more than any other is the name “My son” or “My daughter,” regardless of age.

3. A special love from the Father. Relationally speaking,

there are two kinds of people. The first type of person is dominated by unhealthy fears of non-acceptance and that fear sabotages the way they see themselves and the way they engage people and manage their relationships. The second type of person has encountered and experienced unconditional love, feels deeply accepted and is being set free from the real insecurities that sabotage relationships. Scripture says: "There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love," (1 John 4:18, MSG). God the Father says to His Son, "I love you, Son." God says to us: "I love you, son" to liberate us from insecurity as men and set us on a firm and mature emotional foundation.

4. A special blessing from the Father. While acceptance without performance sets us free from insecurity and fear, affirmation of progression is also needed in a man's life. It's called encouragement. It's not just any kind of encouragement, but the thoughtful kind that is watching, observing and drawing the conclusion of "in whom I am well pleased." God was saying that He was pleased with who Jesus had become as a man.

What God models with His Son He wants to replicate with all of His spiritual sons and daughters adopted into the family through Jesus Christ. He knows that in order to escape deep insecurities, false names and identities, immaturity and acting selfishly, all men, all women and all children need a personal and powerful encounter with their Father.

He wants us fully formed in His love so that we can help form our children in that same love. Men and women cannot give away what they do not possess on the inside to their children, spouse or others God has placed in their life to influence. That realization sometimes takes a lifetime to come to, but many times it's too late (or so you believe).

The good news of Christmas is that with God it is never too late to receive the gift of your Father's blessing. Once received, opening it is as easy as one, two, three:

- **Personally** see God's heart for you as a Father (Jer. 3:19).
- **Openly** accept His blessing and respond to Him (Rom. 8:15-16).
- **Emotionally** define yourself by His acceptance alone (Rom. 8:37).

The reason Jesus Christ came that first Christmas was so that all of us could stop searching for love and acceptance and start living in our Father's blessing and under His loving rule. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit modeled for us at Jesus' baptism, what every child and adult are created to receive from our earthly fathers initially and our Heavenly Father ultimately.

We all crave a special moment, special name, special love and special blessing from our Creator. God offers that freely in Christ because he knows that a broken world filled with broken dads fail to give that to their sons and daughters. That's why so many adult men and women stood up in front of a room full of people. That's why some of us spend the rest of our lives on a broken quest for significance and meaning.

God knows that in order to successfully navigate the emotional challenges, temptations, and tests on our journey here on earth, we need the pervasive and securing love of a father, as well as His promise that all will be okay in the end. If that is what God felt Jesus needed going forward, then that is what we all need going forward—no need to wait for Christmas morning to open that gift.

Heavenly Father,

In this moment, I recognize You want to be a loving Father to me. Forgive me for not seeing this sooner, seeking approval of

people outside of Your love, and not seeing Your Father's heart for me. I recognize that through Jesus I can become a child of God and live strongly as a child of God. I recognize that through His life, death on the cross, and resurrection for me I can share in His life and have you as my heavenly Father forever. Today, I open the gift of salvation, receive the gift of Your acceptance, and fully embrace the gift of Your love through Jesus. I receive Your name for me, Your love for me, and Your blessing upon me now and forever. Thank You redeeming my identity and calling me Yours. Amen.

Kenny Luck is the president and founder of Every Man Ministries. As the former men's pastor at Saddleback Church in California and current leadership pastor at Crossline Community Church, Kenny has found the proven way to improve men's ministries around the world. Sleeping Giant is this blueprint, and gives men the tools they need to lead and understand their own men's ministry. Watch Kenny's teachings at [and](#) start your men's group today!

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