

David Wilkerson's Son Shares a Timely Word for This Holiday Season

Every year as we patiently await Christmas morning, we are reminded of the real significance of Christmas—the coming of Jesus. Our hearts are filled with gratitude that God the Father sent a Savior to redeem us. And celebrating Christ's birth is a sweet and pleasant time filled with blessings of all kinds. We love seeing colorful presents around the tree in our living room. We enjoy singing carols and hymns, and thanking God for His many blessings. Some of us even enjoy "A Charlie Brown Christmas," with Linus reading from Luke 2 at the end.

Though this is a beautiful picture, it isn't the reality for most people this time of year. Some of us don't feel "merry" and "bright," and we are often consumed with to-do lists, shopping, errands and the burdens of everyday life. Instead of remembering God's blessings, we are burdened by the pressure the holidays bring. Our culture embraces consumerism and wants, and it's easy to forget God's blessings and their true meaning and purpose in our lives.

When I'm bogged down by the activity of the holiday season, it helps me to remember that ultimately, God is in control and created everything around me. Scripture tells us this:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the water" (Gen. 1:1-2).

God created everything—the oceans, the rivers, the birds, the animals, sea creatures, all vegetation and "man in his own image"—and after each day of creation, He proclaimed, "It is

good." After creating man and woman, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Gen. 1:28).

"Blessed" is a powerful word here. The kind of blessing God gave was the power to achieve things yet to be realized. He was saying, "I have filled the earth with glorious and wonderful things that I call good, and now I am giving you power to fill up the earth with the things that please me. I am blessing you and giving you dominion over every living thing on the earth."

As we understand that everything we have is a gift from God, we must also realize that Satan will attempt to manipulate God's blessings and turn them into things that we try to control ourselves (see Gen. 3:1). Satan is crafty, and he will try to thwart the good things God has given us and manipulate our thinking about how God desires for us to use them. The first sin in the Garden of Eden was using good things in a sinful way.

The Christmas season is meant to be a gift and reminder to us of what God has done. But just as Eve was tempted in the garden, temptation can come to us when we least expect it. Our focus often drifts away from the blessings of God to our own desires and needs and how we can bless ourselves rather than others.

Genesis 50:20 states, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many lives."

Jesus' birth comes at a central point in the long conflict throughout Scripture of Satan attempting to defeat God's plans. The Good News of the coming of Jesus is our ultimate victory in this story. He defeats death and gives us an

eternal blessing—the gift of true life with him forever for those who believe.

We are to take the blessings of God and use them to glorify the King. It is wonderful to see the cycle of receiving and giving—giving generously—to those in need. As we approach Christmas, I invite you to remember one of the greatest blessings of all: the gift of a Savior to redeem you.

In the busy holiday season, it is easy to get caught up in the shopping and in the doing, but instead, I encourage you to pause, take a look at your own blessings and ask God what He would have you do for others. He blesses those whose hearts are open to give of their possessions or their time to make a difference in the lives of others. God has blessed you to be a blessing! {eoa}

Gary Wilkerson is the president of World Challenge, a global ministry dedicated to helping people experience a fulfilling life through resources, conferences and long-term solutions for communities in need. As an author, speaker and former pastor, Wilkerson shares empowering messages and sermons through World Challenge's devotionals and newsletters reaching hundreds of thousands of people. His latest book, God's Favor, provides an honest, fresh perspective of what God's blessings mean for the Christian life and how people can embrace them not just for themselves, but for others around them. It releases in February 2019.