

Embrace the True Spirit of Christmas: Give From the Heart

Christmas is known as the most joyous time of the year, and a large part of that happiness stems from the season of giving. More than any other holiday, Christmas encourages people to be generous, emulating the wise men, who brought gifts to the Christ child. Yet in our modern world, with the holiday rush and commercialism, it's easy to become so wrapped up in our own festivities that we forget the deeper call to share with those in need.

Perhaps more so this year than any in the recent past, after a long slog of a seemingly endless election cycle with one new upheaval after another, we now arrive at the 2024 holidays grateful for the timeless season of goodwill, giving, hope, family, friends and peace. From the start we celebrate the birth of our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus. But Jesus was born of a virgin in a manger for more than just the beloved Christmas story from Luke 2. God gave us Himself, to remind us we are not and never will be alone. God shows us His giving, pouring out Himself in an act of extravagant generosity, as Pastor Greg Locke might say.

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As Christians, we are uniquely positioned to model a spirit of generosity. We understand that giving is not just a kind gesture but an essential part of faith—we believe in the principle of sowing and reaping, and we recognize the blessings that flow from giving. However, we often find ourselves preoccupied, focusing on our own needs and the needs of those in our immediate circle. It's time to look outward

and let this Christmas season be an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those around us.

This tradition of giving has been particularly meaningful to me, partly because of an experience I had as a child. When I was 5, my father, a pastor in Springfield, Missouri, learned that a family in our church was struggling after the father lost his job. My parents encouraged each of my siblings and me—all five of us under the age of 5—to take one of our Christmas gifts and give it to the children in that family. This small act of kindness taught me an invaluable lesson: It truly is more blessed to give than to receive. That simple but powerful memory has remained with me, especially during the holiday season, reminding me of the real joy found in giving.



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Each December, millions of Americans celebrate Christmas with an outpouring of gifts to friends and family, and this tradition is wonderful. More than 30 years ago, we estimated that many Christian families were spending \$600 or more on holiday presents, and I imagine that number has grown. While there's nothing wrong with gift-giving, imagine the impact if we also set aside a portion of what we spend for gifts dedicated to the Lord. This is something I've done for the past several years, and it has made the whole holiday season much more meaningful.

In my own family, we take time each December to calculate our spending on Christmas gifts, and then we earmark 10% of that amount as a special "birthday present to Jesus." This offering is given in addition to our regular tithes and is directed

toward ministries or those in need, reflecting our gratitude for God's greatest gift to us: His Son. I've encouraged readers of Charisma magazine to join us in this practice, and it's been heartwarming to hear from others who have felt the joy of giving in this way.

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