

It's More Blessed to Give

by Stephen Strang

One of my earliest memories of Christmas takes me back to 1956, when I got my first bicycle. It was a wonderful Christmas in which my brother and sister and I received many nice gifts. But that year, my parents did something that remains with me years later. They encouraged us to give one of our newly opened gifts to a poor family in our church. I don't remember why the family was poor. Nor do I remember what I gave. But I do remember visiting their home and giving those kids something I probably wanted to keep.

It was a good reminder to me that the focus at Christmas is on giving, not getting, as our materialistic culture would like us to believe. The Bible says, "'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35, NKJV).

Today my family "tithes" on what we give—not out of legalistic necessity but to remind ourselves that we should give to Jesus at the time of year we remember His birth. We add up what we spend and give a special offering of roughly 10 percent of the total cost of our gifts.

Some years we've taken gifts down to a homeless shelter in our area. One year I went there dressed as Santa Claus and, after telling them

the story of the
real meaning of Christmas, I distributed the gifts to some
neighborhood children
as well as to some toothless homeless men.

Other years we've given to a national ministry we felt was
doing a good work.
Operation Holiday Hope, sponsored by Bill Wilson in New York
City, is one
example.

Most years we remember the men at a Teen Challenge training
center nearby who
can't go home for Christmas. We give them some small gifts to
let them know they
are remembered.

In all of this, the point I make to my own two sons and my
staff is that at
Christmas we go out of our way to give to others less
fortunate than ourselves.

As we
join together to help others less fortunate, we minister to
the Lord who said,
"'Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My
brethren, you did it to
Me'" (Matt. 25:40).

This article is from the December 2002 issue of *Charisma*