

Resist the Pressure of Giving Gifts You Can't Afford

Deep inside your head, voices whisper:

Your son will flunk science and his brain will atrophy into egg whites unless he gets the Every Kid's Quasar Wave Radio Telescope for his bedroom, scanning for life on other planets—"able to hear a pin drop from six billion light years."

Or . . .

Your daughter will consider you a goddess IF you can snag her the same boots worn by lead-singer Venus of the stage-rattling female rock band, the Deep Fried Voodoo Dolls.

Or . . .

Hari-kari is your only option, sir, short of receiving platinum-plated golf clubs—grip-fitted with a material developed for Navy-SEAL gloves when scaling sheer ice cliffs . . . ropeless . . . in gale-force winds.

Or . . .

You, madame, will be caroled by angels and swept to Paradise on gusts of rapture surpassing both LOVE and CHOCOLATE when you open a gift box containing . . . (you get the idea).

But Solomon, the world's richest (not just wisest) man, said: "Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are the eyes of man." Proverbs 27:20

He's talking about your horde of THINGS that will soon feel so last-year. They'll disappoint like the perfect week at the beach turned rain-soggy.

The day funeral homes close shop and hospitals sit empty, the day all hurricanes are stillborn and death cries “Uncle!”—not ‘til then, says Proverbs, will your “eyes,” your heart, be content with STUFF.

So the little book urges this prayer:

“Two things I ask of you,

O Lord . . . ,

give me neither poverty

nor riches,

but give me only my daily bread.

Otherwise, I may have too much

and disown you . . .

Or I may become poor and steal.”

Proverbs 30:7–9

Go ahead and prowl the mall, he’s saying—shop the net, wrap a few gifts, pencil a wish list yourself.

But keep it simple, and remember what’s important.

“Neither poverty nor riches” under the tree.

It’ll work better that way.

Really.

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Steven Estes is a pastor who has known “better Decembers with my family than either Currier or Ives,” but also understands a gray Christmas. *A Better December* draws on Estes’ twenty-three years of counseling church members through the holiday season as well his other writings on the topic of human suffering.

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Estes is the author of *Called to Die* (the story of slain missionary Chet Bitterman), and co-author (with friend Joni Eareckson Tada) of *When God Weeps* and *A Step Further*. He and his wife, Verna, have eight children.

Learn more about Estes and his books at .