

Christmas Is for Giving

If Christmas is the happiest time of the year, it's because in this season, people are more generous in giving to others. After all, the gift-giving tradition follows the example of the Magi who gave gifts to the Christ child.

As Christians, we should lead the world as an example of giving and being more generous than our secular neighbors because we understand sowing and reaping as well as the blessings that come from giving. But too often our busyness, engagement with commercialism and taking care of ourselves and our small circle leave us no better than the world. So let's make a difference in the lives of those who need it.

Over the years, *Charisma* has encouraged our readers to be generous at Christmas, inspired to some extent by a childhood experience of mine. When I was 5 years old, my father pastored in Springfield, Missouri, and a family in the church was going through a tough time because the father had lost his job. My parents encouraged my siblings and I (all five and under) to take a gift we received at Christmas and give it to the children in that family. As young as I was, I learned it is more blessed to give than to receive.

For many years *Charisma* raised money for gifts for Bill Wilson and his Metro Ministry in New York. In fact, what we did inspired Bill to raise money every year to give each child in the ministry one gift. For many children, it's the only Christmas present they get.

One year we worked with Danita Estrella Watts (featured in the cover story in this issue) to give \$10 gifts to children in Haiti. That doesn't seem like much in our prosperous country, where parents spend an average of more than \$200 on gifts per child.

"We gave gifts to over 1,000 children," Danita told me in a

recent *Strang Report* podcast. "And 400 of those were in our school. For the boys, soccer is their passion. ... So for lots of the boys, we gave them nice soccer balls, sports equipment. For the girls, we gave all kinds of dolls. To the older girls, we gave jewelry or perfume."

Those \$10 gifts made a huge impact. Danita says one child received a small doll in a cardboard box. She later learned from one of her staff that the gift was so valued the child hung it on the wall, box and all, like an expensive painting in the hovel the child called home. She never played with it, presumably because of its value.

Danita says some of the children who received those \$10 gifts are now in college and they are still grateful not only for the gifts but for the memories created through our readers' generosity. "To this day, they talk about how special it was when they were little and they woke up to a stocking on their bed with their name on it, full of little treats and goodies," she says. "And then they would get to open up their gifts, and all day we'd be in the kitchen, cooking breakfast, cooking lunch, making dinner—trying the best we could to create the feeling of family, of closeness, of what it really is to celebrate Christmas."

In Haiti, the average per capita household income is only \$1,250—lowest in the Western Hemisphere. We have so much, and they have so little.

Charisma has been working with Danita's Children for more than two decades and it's exciting to give an update. It was my idea to invite our readers (as we have so many times) to give at Christmas so Danita's ministry can buy 1,000 children a \$10 gift. Please give through our nonprofit partner, Christian Life Missions, by either mailing a check to 600 Rinehart Rd., Lake Mary, FL 32746 or giving online at . CLM will send every dollar to Danita and mail you a tax-exempt receipt. We never know how much will come in, but any extra will go to families

who are desperate for food. Danita tells me food is one of the greatest needs in Haiti due to violence and unrest.

Someone suggested that Christians ought to think of tithing—giving at least 10%—on what they give their own families for Christmas. I've tried to do this for many years and I plan to give generously to Danita's children. Won't you join me?
