

Nothing Says 'Merry Christmas' Like Benevolence

Christmas is a time for memories. I always enjoy looking back over the December issues of *Charisma* and re-reading all of my Christmas-related columns.

Some had to do with Christmas customs; others were about the culture wars to take Christ out of Christmas. Some years, I showed pictures of my staff or my young family and shared my own Christmas memories.

Every couple of years, starting in 1984, I'd urge readers—much as I am now—to do what my wife, Joy, and I have done for years: give a tithe of what we spend at Christmas to the poor.

This was etched in my mind as a child when one Christmas my parents asked my brother, sister and me to pick a gift from the many we'd received and give it to a family in our church that didn't have much. I don't remember the details, but I think the father was out of work. In fact, I can't recall what I gave—but I do remember going to their house to give them our gifts and how happy they seemed.

Christmas is about giving. It's when God gave His Son. And didn't the tradition of gift-giving originate with the magi, who brought gifts to the Christ child?

Yet Christmas has become an orgy of consumer spending. Many retailers make most of their annual profit at Christmas time. Even as believers, we tend to get caught up in the world's values of buying gifts. Usually our purchases are for loved ones who already probably have much more than they need.

The antidote, I believe, is to be proactive, to consciously give to the poor and to encourage others to do the same. When I first urged *Charisma* readers in 1984, and in many December

issues since then, to give to worthwhile ministries at Christmas, it was because I believe that in giving to “the least of these My brethren,” as Jesus said in Matthew 25:40, you’re giving to Christ Himself.

A practical suggestion on how to do this is to give a tithe of what you spend on others. For instance, if you spend \$1,000 at Christmas on gifts, determine you’ll give \$100. My family does this. Over the years we’ve raised hundreds of thousands of dollars, much of it through Christian Life Missions, our nonprofit partner. If every reader of *Charisma* gave only \$5, it would total more than \$1 million this year.

There are many ministries or needs you can give to. It doesn’t matter so much whom you give to but that you give and do it as unto the Lord. We believe it will make all the difference in the way you celebrate Christ’s birth this year.

From all of us at *Charisma*, a very merry and blessed Christmas to everyone and a happy New Year!

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