

'Tis the Season to Be Generous

"Are you going to give him some money, Mom?" Jimmy asked as we left Wal-Mart and were passing a man collecting for the Salvation Army.

Suddenly, I felt self-conscious. I fumbled in my purse, finding my change purse and extracting a handful of coins, I dropped them into the Salvation Army bucket. In my heart, I felt annoyed. You see, I really didn't want to part with my money at that moment. I had just spent much more money than I had planned and I felt "pushed" into giving. But I wanted to be generous in front of my son.

Have you ever felt that struggle before? You want to give because you know it is the right thing to do, but you also feel as though you can barely stretch the money you have to cover all the holiday expenses.

The Christmas season is the season of giving. As wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, friends and co-workers, it can feel as though we are always giving to others and that there is just not enough to go around. Why is there so much giving at Christmas?

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16, MEV).

God started the Christmas celebration we know today 2,000 years ago by *giving*. He gave the world the only thing that He has just one of, His only begotten (not created) Son. Jesus Himself gave. Our promised Messiah gave up His glory, laying it aside, to take on human flesh, to be found as a man. He gave so others could live. He gave His life as a ransom for many. Our God is called the Father of Lights, who gives good

and perfect gifts. How lavished with love we are to receive His mercy.

The greatest thing we can do to honor the Lord is to imitate Him. We imitate him by giving our time, treasures, money and energy. Christmas is a time to give so that others will be blessed. Giving our money to charities or spending our money to buy gifts for the ones we love begins in our hearts.

Generous hearts lead to generous pocketbooks. And the gifts that flow from hearts of love are the very best gifts. As we grow in our relationship with the Lord, we become more like Him. Just as He began the first Christmas with giving, so we celebrate every Christmas in our life with a generous heart.

But, I guess I am preaching to the choir. You already want to be generous, but, like me, you don't always feel like giving. Or maybe you are bombarded with so many requests to give, that you simply don't know where to begin. Here are some steps to take to give generously with wisdom:

1. Cultivate a heart like God. Spend time in His Presence; let His love wash over you until you love what He loves and hates what He hates. He will put His desires in your heart and put certain people, ministries, and needs on your heart. The closer we are to Him, the more we feel what He feels.

2. Prayerfully plan where and what to give. Be led by the Holy Spirit, rather than emotions or emotional appeals. Let wisdom direct you! You don't have to have God speak audibly to be led by the Holy Spirit; simply follow His leading in this area. He may put a "burden" on your heart or simply open or close doors.

3. Pray for each person you want to give presents to this year. Be led by the Lord as you choose the perfect gift for them. Let your heart direct the purchase of the gift and the giving of the gift. Let gift giving be ministry this year, rather than a duty that is exhausting. When you know the Lord

is leading you to give a gift, you can enjoy the whole process with Him, watching Him provide bargains, sales and opportunities!

4. Don't go into debt—no matter what. If you have no money, make gifts or give gift coupons of time.

5. Set aside a small amount of cash in your purse to give spontaneously (to Salvation Army and other ministries that you run into). This way the money is already set aside and when it's gone, it's gone. Anywhere from \$ to over \$, depending on your financial situation, is appropriate.

When we give, God gives back to us. We reap what we sow. We know all the promises, and even though that's not why we give, it helps to know that our cup will not run dry by being generous. So stretch your heart open a little and trust Him to fill it back up!

Let's honor the Lord and be generous this season. Have a glad, generous Christmas season! Remember, 'tis the season to be generous.

Merry Christmas. Oh, and I have a gift for you. Our family's Christmas Devotions—free! You can download *Curtis Family Christmastime Devotions* at .

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