

What If Wal-Mart Really Could Sell Hope, Joy and Peace for \$2.99?

What a value. Last year, a colleague related an interesting story.

Evidently his daughter needed some new Christmas plates. Those of us who are men should be very grateful that God created women to live our lives with us. Otherwise, we would use the same plates all year—even *at holiday times*.

Now, you can even decorate with a larger plate to go underneath the regular plate. The larger plate (called a charger) is available in a multitude of colors, one for each season and/or holiday. And, of course, they can't go in the dishwasher because they are too delicate and must be washed by hand. But, I digress.

His daughter found wonderful Christmas plates at Wal-Mart. There was a different Christmas word on each plate. "Peace" on one. "Hope" on another. And of course "Joy."

Even as I typed this story, I realized that my wife would read it, and there was a really good chance we would end up with some of these same plates—especially because when my friend's daughter got to the checkout, they were *on sale*. She watched as the register screen read, "'Hope' ... \$, 'Joy' ... \$, 'Peace' ... \$." They were discounted. Money saved.

What if Wal-Mart really could sell hope, joy and peace for \$? Would folks line up hours before the store opened with lines that stretched all around the building? Would they? But has not God already offered hope, peace and joy to mankind? Are they not available to all who will come and partake? In Romans 15:13 the apostle Paul wrote, "May the God of *hope* fill you

with all *joy* and *peace* as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (NIV, emphasis added).

God, at exactly the right time, sent forth His Son, Jesus, so that He might redeem us and we might receive adoption as sons. Jesus—God in the flesh. He was born, and lived, and even while we were still sinners, died for us. Why? To make the kingdom of God available to all who make the decision to accept Him. Paul continues with the “kingdom of God is ... righteousness and *peace and joy*” (Romans 14:17, emphasis added).

Jesus declared that He came so that we might have *life*, and not just life—*abundant* life (see John 10:10). Life filled with hope, peace and joy. But providing this life to us cost *Him* His own life.

Yes, it is probably true that if Wal-Mart could sell these gifts for \$ each, the masses would flock to buy them. And yet, God already provided them through His Son. This is how God loved the world. He gave His only Son to pay the price for us so that we might have this hope, peace and joy.

The price was costly. It was His shed blood for you and for me. He paid it so that we might experience eternal salvation and *abundant hope, joy and peace filled lives*. And this is not just when we get to heaven, but even *right now!* We can experience this now in this life that we live here on this earth.

During this Christmas season, as you reflect on His birth, remember why He was born. Read over the Christmas story. Enjoy it. Meditate on it. Remember that He was born of a virgin, at exactly the right time, so that He could later die. And it was only because He rose again that His death has any meaning or power. Here’s the power to fill your life with *hope, peace and joy*.

Sure, life is tough. The evil one came to steal from us. He came to steal our hope, our peace, our joy—and even our very lives. Simply refuse to let him. Resist him; he will flee from you. Take time to soak in God's Word. Spend time with your Father. Thank Him for His gift. Your heart, mind and soul will be filled with hope, peace and joy. I promise.

Prayer Power for the Week of December 20, 2015

This week take time away from the busyness of the season to focus on Christ and what He's done for you. Meditate on the miraculous timing and circumstances of His birth and reflect on the wonder of it all. Ask God to fill and empower you with His Spirit so that you can impact the world around you. Remember the poor and needy and look for opportunities to share God's love in tangible ways. Continue to pray for worldwide revival and lift up Israel and the persecuted church. Thank God for His continued protection over our land and loved ones. Remember those serving in the military and away from their loved ones (Gal. 4:4; Rom 14:17).