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Stuff that matters to Wayne

Overcoming the 'spirit of christmas' with the Spirit of Christ: Part 6 in a Series: Dealing With Pressure to Buy Gifts

Posted on January 03,2015 by Wayne Taylor

If you haven't been following the series, it started a while back now and the goal here is to shoot some 'sacred cows' and see if the foundation we are building on is solid, or one of 'shaky foundations'. Here are some quick links to the series:

- [Part 1: Roots](#)
- [Part 2: Tree vs Vine](#)
- [Part 3: Santa](#)
- [Part 4: Pull Your Child from School?](#)
- [Part 5: Practical Alternatives](#)

Today in Part 6 we're going to focus on perhaps one of the most challenging and dangerous parts of our big holidays - the pressure to buy gifts. First, as a believer, I wanted to review what God said about giving. Thanks to the world wide webbers, I don't have to do it myself! Someone already made this comprehensive overview page on the topic.

[>>What the God of the Bible says about Giving<<](#)

I like how this page started out by pointing out the greatest gift of history: God gave Jesus to die on a cross for us. Top that gift! The next best thing you can do in line after that is to lay down your life for someone else. Have you laid down your life for someone else or have you been clinging to 'what's in it for me?' Don't be hard on yourself. It's a work in progress. Selfishness is rooted deep in your blood thanks to that couple that goofed up in the garden way back when. Before we even talk about 'gifts' it's important to look straight at our hearts and decide if we are 'giving people' or 'taking people'. I don't suppose we can be both. However, we also must learn how to receive. Why? Well, if you don't know how to receive then you are blocking the giver from receiving their blessing from performing the good act of giving. Simple as that. Now, if someone has evil motives for giving (ie. a brown bag of cash under the table to a politician) then you don't need to be a receiver, nor will you block any blessings. But if someone feels in their heart they want to give you a gift, you have to learn how to receive it and be thankful deep in your heart. And for some reason this is hard for me, but I am slowly getting better. For me, as soon as I receive a gift, I feel that I owe the giver something. I feel that I have to 'level the playing field'. This is especially true in Korea. Ask any Korean how gift giving works at a wedding for the bride and groom! But this is neither giving nor receiving. This is cold, cruel accounting. Our hearts, if we cannot receive a gift with thanksgiving, nor can give a gift with joy, are cold and of no value, in my not-so-humble-opinion. Now that we've covered quickly the topic of making sure we are actually giving and receiving people, let's look at gifts themselves. For most people, they envision a gift as a box with wrapping paper. Ask a kid to 'draw a gift'. I'm guessing they will not draw Jesus bleeding on the cross for you, but praise God if your kid does! They will likely draw this:

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[ghetto gift](#)
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But the thing is... people forget that a 'gift' is different to each person. If you read the awesome and famous book 'The Five Love Languages' by Gary Chapman, you'll quickly learn that for some people it is a gift in a box but for others, it's a walk in the park.

Time is Money.

Time is a Gift That Cannot Be Replaced.

2008 until now has been a hard time for our family in the sense that we've had to rely on others due to some sad financial situation that has hit us that was largely out of our control. This has made the idea of lavish spending and long vacations a difficult task to say the least. Through it all, though, I cannot thank God enough for the experience because I can truly be content now. I drive a 1997 Dodge neon. I have no idea when it's going to die but praise God it works today. My wife has the nice car (Ford) which I had to buy for a sales job... Anyway, who cares? I couldn't be happier this year. I've got my health, my family, my friends, my brain. I'm learning, I'm growing and in due season 'it too shall pass away'.

In the meantime, though, what matters?

I spent some time thinking back on my childhood about what I remember. I can remember a couple of gifts (two way radios, and Wayne Gretzky's Rocket Hockey) but the rest is pretty much gone. However, what I do remember is a warm house with loving parents. I also remember my dad used to take me out and throw a baseball back and forth and play with me outside. I'll never forget that. I have a great dad and mom. Mom made me food for lunch so I could walk home and eat it while the other kids ate cheese and salami sandwiches. I used to feel left out and now I realize I was a king's kid compared to those processed meals!

That stuff matters.

That stuff lives on.

>>Andnone of it would be in my memory if they didn't give their time to me!<<

The sweaters, smart phones, stereos, dancing reindeer, Obama bobble heads.... none of that matters. It, like your flesh, will one day go back to the earth.

Your time and expression thereof is really all you have to give if you dig down to the heart of it.

And I think that concludes this post. I got my revelation.

This does deserve a follow up with some practical gift ideas (box/wrap style gifts) for those who feel loved by getting them. There are great 'alternative gifts' out there and I'd like to focus a post on them. We don't need to go into debt for this stuff. Easter is coming and someone told me there is gift giving pressure associated with this holiday now. Let's start right now to prepare against that temptation and pressure.

Afterthought: I also realize that you have to work (spend your time) to get the money to buy the gift in a box so it also, to some extent, is an expression of your time and life.

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