

GIVE MORE

READ: Isaiah 9:6-7, Ephesians 1:3-10

SAY: Giving is a tiny act of expressing the way we think or feel about someone. It says, "You matter to me!" It says, "I'll give something away that's important to me in order to show that I care about you!" or "I'm thinking about you!" Have you ever given a gift wondering what you'll get in return? Sometimes you might think, "I've put so much time and effort and money into this present... I hope I get something good too." The reasons for how and what we give are really important. They express love, and they also give a little peek into what we hope for.



Similarly, the Father gave us the gift of His Son with a glimpse into His love and a few of His hopes: that we'll be healed, that we'll be a united family, that we'll see Jesus as the best King.

Imagine it. God, the spinner of galaxies, the star-maker, the ant protector, the eagle feeder, the commander of angels gave Himself to a very broken place, filled with hurting and angry people in order to help us experience His loving kindness. He showed love through the language of sacrificial giving.

Now consider an all-too-familiar cultural Christmas. We have the tradition of buying an item (or gift card) for a person because it's tradition. Imagine if God were to give to this way: trinkets that we throw away once they wear out and break. Do you think He would have sacrificed His only Son for us?

The King says that the way we give is very important in His story. Listen to what He says: "The amount you give will be given back to you, but even more-so." (Luke 6:38) Sounds awesome, yeah? But Jesus wasn't talking about Xboxes or candy. He was talking about how the love and mercy we give away in this life will be a mirrored experience in the next life.

In other words, how and what and why we give really, really matters to our King because our King first expressed it to us to show His goodness to others. He has given us so much! Ephesians chapter 1 tells us that He's "lavished" or we could even say "heaped" His gifts on us, "every spiritual gift in the heavenly places" and He did all of this before we knew Him, even when we'd rebel against Him.

However, this doesn't lead us into guilt, it directs us into joyful generosity. When we see His kindness, it grows kindness within us! Just like you've considered what it means to spend less as a family, think through what it also means to give more as you love others!

ASK:

- Is there someone in your family who wants your *presence* most? Maybe they don't need another sweater or more shower gel, but would love to spend time with you.
- Are there people who are not your family who would love a gift of presence? Maybe your family could choose to bless a local nursing home or homeless shelter during the holiday season where your presence would be a blessing to people who often feel ignored or forgotten.

PRACTICE:

- Give gifts that are personal, like giving a piece of your very own heart.
- Give gifts like that of *presence*, where we choose to be fully present with the ones we love or present with some who may feel forgotten.
- Don't be afraid to give the type of gifts that are pricey when it comes to the price of time, the price of effort, the price of creativity, the price of vulnerability, the price of love.

PRAY: Thank God for giving us the costly gift of His Son. Ask Him to help you give meaningfully and sacrificially this Advent season.

