

Avoiding the Christmas Crunch

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First off – it's ok to give gifts at Christmas time.

The bible teaches us that we are made in God's image – and who has given us more? God has us wired up so that giving tends to be a part of our nature. God wants us to give as a response to his goodness in our lives.

“Every good and perfect gift is from above” – James 1:17

Being a generous giver means being one who gives with

- An obedient will,
- A joyful attitude, and
- A compassionate heart

When we give with that attitude we are asking the holy spirit to work in our lives to break the hold that money and possessions can have on us. We are celebrating the blessing of god in our lives, and we are asking god to use us as a blessing to others.

If our gift giving comes out of a faithful attitude - desiring to honor God through our generosity to others - our gift giving will be less about what we are spending and more about the importance of the others whom God has put in our lives.

Often at this time of the year however we fall victim to negative motives when we give to others.

“Unless our motives are right, we can give all we have – even our bodies as sacrifices – and it will be for naught.” – 1 Corinthians 13.

Some of these motives may be:

- Pride
- Guilt
- Envy
- Fear
- Obligation

Can you think of examples of gift giving that you have done in the past that fit any of these motivations?

As responsible stewards of what God has provided us, we should give with an attitude that it is God who has provided us with the resources to bless others – so let's endeavor to do so wisely.

“We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift.” – 2 Corinthians 8:20.

Remember, Christmas is a religious holiday. The Celebration of Christ's birth was not designed as a marketing bonanza for retailers. It was meant to be a time of worship . . . Honoring Christ for his commitment to save this world from its sin. Ask God to fill you with his wisdom as you make Christmas spending decisions. In this way your gift giving can be God-honoring worship instead of a maddening spending frenzy.

We all know what the holidays can do to a family's finances. For many of us the process of holiday spending often leads to some form of post-Christmas remorse.

One of the tell-tale-signs of this remorse is that you wish you had communicated better with your spouse about gift buying so that you wouldn't be shocked with the final tally. Lots of times folks under-allocate for gift buying in their budgets – and basically ignore – or are afraid to face – what they usually spend

As responsible stewards it makes sense to develop a Christmas spending plan. This plan should tie in

- All that we would like to do during the holidays,**
- Everyone on our gift lists, and**
- The resources we have that we can use to put it all together.**

This plan applies to us all, but for couples it presents some major opportunities for discussion in developing their plans.