

Am I Less of a Christian if I Can't Give Everybody a Present?

By Dr. Taffy Wagner

It's the week before Thanksgiving and your mind is filled with thoughts of what meal you plan to prepare. As you walk around the stores, all you see is Christmas trees, ornaments, wrapping paper and tons and tons of gift baskets, etc. For children of various ages all they can think about are presents, presents and more presents. You have begun playing this GIFT list over in your mind of all the people you want to buy for. You even start thinking about the different places you can purchase gifts on sale especially since you've been watching the circulars in the newspaper.

Every time you read the newspaper, you are reminded the day after Thanksgiving is Black Friday. This is when all hysteria breaks loose in the retail world. People are getting up early to be at the store when they should be sleeping, preparing for work or something else instead of rushing to stand in line when the store only has a couple of items and your main motivation is to spend less per item, so you can purchase more of the items on your list for all the different people.

Deep down you knew this year was going to be different based on all the economic factors that have happened throughout the year. You have a long Gift list and you know you cannot purchase for everyone. Before Christmas even arrives, you begin asking yourself, "Am I less of a Christian if I can't give everybody a present?" If you are thinking in the worldly fashion your answer would be yes, because *you think* it is your responsibility to give everybody a present that is on your list. I said "*you think*" – this says your mindset has already been preconditioned to think so.

According to Webster's dictionary, mindset means a fixed state of mind. Not a bad definition but this one from Dictionary.com is better. Mindset means a fixed mental attitude or disposition that predetermines a person's responses to and interpretations of situations. Did you get that? You already have a fixed (permanent) attitude that has predetermined you are less of a Christian if you cannot give everybody a present.

Where did this mindset come from? I would venture to say this started somewhere in your youth. Maybe it was from hearing it is better to give than to receive. Or it could have come from somewhere else. Regardless of where this mindset came from, it is time to renew your mind to the Word of God. Romans 12:1, 2 – *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Knowing this has already been predetermined for you, this is how you change that mindset.

Before you make your list and check it twice take the following steps.

- 1. Resolve within yourself that you will not be purchasing gifts to please people.**
- 2. You will not live beyond your means and overspend during the holiday season where you regret the bills that will come at the beginning of the year.**
- 3. Draw names so there is no pressure to purchase more than one gift.**
- 4. If you have a small family purchase one gift for everyone and limit the dollar amount.**

Material gifts are here today and gone tomorrow. We tend to forget the true occasions for holidays, which are being thankful every day, celebrating Jesus' birth and gifts from the heart which are everlasting.

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