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SERIES: Christmas: Receiving And Giving Love

TITLE: Program 3 – Giving The Gift Of Love

WEDNESDAY

OPEN

You've got your shopping list. You know who needs what and you're ready to go and buy, because Christmas to many, many people is about giving, the giving of gifts. I want to ask you a question: Have you thought about what you're going to give God this year? You see there would be no Christmas apart from God. There would not be a Christmas if God had not sent His Son in the fullness of time to die for you. So what are you going to give Him in return? We'll talk about it today.

PART ONE

What's the first word that comes into your mind when I say "Christmas"? Is it gifts? Is it parties? Is it pain? Is it loneliness? Is it family? Is it joy? What is the first word that you associate with Christmas? Well if Christmas is going to be everything that you dream of it being, the word that you ought to associate with Christmas, Beloved, is the word "love", because Christmas is

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about love. Christmas is about, first of all, receiving the love of God, because that baby whose birth we are celebrating was God's ultimate expression of His love. In John 3:16 it says, **"...God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...."** (John 3:16) Jesus came in the fullness of time. He was born of a virgin. He was born without sin. He was born to die; to die for your sins and my sins so that you and I who are separated from God might be reconciled to God. Christmas is about love, a love that reconciles, a love that takes two that are at enmity with one another and again makes them friends or brings them back. Love reconciles. It's not God that needs to be reconciled to man, but it is man that needs to be reconciled to God. Christmas is about love and love heals. Love salves our wounds and brings healing to us. This is what Christmas is all about. Christmas is receiving the love of God. And Christmas is in turn loving others and loving God. Now often we think about the gift that we're going to give to our mother or our father or sister or brother or husband or wife, our kids. And we know that the kids are so excited and we know that they cannot wait. They just cannot wait to open their presents. But Christmas is about the joy of giving to others also. I remember when I was a little girl and my daddy smoked pipes. And what I would do is I would seek to fill his pipe stand with pipes because I knew my daddy loved pipes. And I didn't have a lot of money. I had to work. I had to earn my own money and I had to buy my own pipe. Nobody bought daddy's pipe for me to give to him. So they were not treasures, but they were to me. And I remember I would sit there and I would get so excited I could hardly stand it. Why? Because I loved my daddy and I wanted to make my daddy happy. I wanted my daddy to be thrilled with what I gave him. And of course because pipes are small and because they come in a certain size package I didn't want daddy to know that he was getting a pipe, so I would get an assortment of boxes and I would get big boxes and smaller boxes and smaller boxes inside and sometimes I'd put books and sometimes I'd put bricks to make it look like what it wasn't so

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that as he would open it up the anticipation would build and build and build until finally he would open my pipe, my pipe that said “Daddy, I love you.” I would laugh. I would giggle. I would get so excited. He would get his pipe out. He would light it up and I would be all day long saying, “Do you like it daddy, do you like your pipe daddy?” I wanted my daddy to love what I gave him because I loved my daddy. I want to ask you a question. Do you love your heavenly Father? You say, “Yeah, I love Him.” Does He know it? You say, “He’s God. He knows everything.” Well let me ask you a question: Does your life express your love to God? You say, “How do I do that?” That’s what I want us to look at today. Because I want you to experience the most wonderful Christmas that you can experience. I want us to understand what this season is all about. I want to in a sense, pardon me, I want to “milk it for all it’s worth.” I want you and I to have the true benefit of what it means to remember that this is the time when we celebrate, whether it happened at this time or not really doesn’t matter, but when we celebrate what Christmas is all about: the gift of God’s Son. And if we’re going to celebrate it Beloved, it cannot be celebrated apart from receiving God’s gift of love, apart from giving that gift of love to others, but also apart from loving God as we ought to love God. Now in the light of that I want us to go to the gospel of John. And as we go to John I want us to look at John chapter 14, because in John chapter 14, Jesus is going to talk to us about loving God and you and I need to understand what it means to really love Him. So in John chapter 14, in verse 21 Jesus has told His disciples that He is going away. Jesus has told the disciples that He’s not going to leave them alone, that He’s going to send them another helper and He’s going to send them the Holy Spirit. Their countenance is down and Jesus says, [Don’t let your heart be troubled; I’m going away, but there’s a purpose in My going. In My Father’s house are many mansions, many apartments, and I’m going to prepare a place for you. Now listen carefully. If I go and prepare a place for you, I want you to know that I am going to come again and I’m going to take

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you so that you can be with Me where I am.] (PARAPHRASE, John 14:1-3) And where am I? I'm in the Father's house. So when He comes to take you and you see the Father face to face, is the Father going to look at you and say, "Thank you so much for the gift that you gave Me. Thank you so much for loving Me. Thank you for that gift of love. You really understood, didn't you, what Christmas was all about?" Or when you see Him and you see Him in all of His majesty and all of His holiness and all of His purity and all of His beauty and all of His love, when you see Him are you going to say, "Oh, I absolutely wasted my life because this is who You are. Now I see You and I didn't love You as I ought to have loved You." How are we to love God? Well John chapter 14 Jesus says this, **"after a while, verse 19, "...a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."** (John 14:19-20) He says ["On that day you are really going to understand that here's the Father and I'm in the Father. And if I'm in the Father and you're in Me and I'm in you, then what do you have? You have a happy family."] (PARAPHRASE, John 14:19-20) You have the Father, you have the Son and you have us in the Son and the Son in the Father and we're all together. And He says "You're going to know that." And He says in verse 21, **"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me...."** (John 14:21) You see you not only want to give the gift of love to the Father, but you want to give the gift of love to the Son. And you want to give the gift of love to the Holy Spirit. And so He's saying, ["You have My commandments. If you really love Me you're going to keep them. That's how I know that you love Me."] (PARAPHRASE, John 14:15) So if you and I this Christmas are going to tell God that we love Him and tell Jesus that we love Him and tell the Holy Spirit, we're going to tell them by being obedient to them. The gift that you are to give to God is the gift of obedience. It is to know what He says and to obey what He says and that's the way God says, "I know that you love Me."

He says, **“He who has My commandments and keeps them...” (John 14:21)** There are many people that go to church that know what God has to say, but they don’t keep His Word. They can tell you—they can criticize others, they can judge them, but they don’t keep His commandments. See it’s one thing to know, it’s another thing to do. It’s one thing to hear, it’s another thing to obey. And He goes on to say, **“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” (John 14:21)** Do you want to hear the voice of God? I’m not talking about audibly. I’m not talking about apparitions or miracles or seeing supernatural things. I’m talking about do you want intimacy with God? See Christmas is a time of family intimacy. It’s part of being the family of God. It’s part of receiving Jesus Christ, God’s gift to mankind, believing on Jesus, receiving Him and **“... as many as received Him, to them He [gives] the [power] to become [the sons] of God....” (John 1:12)** But then it’s about living together. And what He’s saying here is, **“...he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and I will disclose Myself to him.” (John 14:21)** [I will reveal Myself to Him.] (Paraphrase) I want to urge you to give yourself time to allow God to disclose Himself to you. And I want to urge you to do that out of giving a gift of love to God. We’ll talk about it more in just a minute and explain it even deeper.

PART TWO

Relationships, they’re so important at Christmas. But the most important relationship for you to have is your relationship with your heavenly Father. We’ve been looking at the fact that if we’re going to give God a gift this year, we need to give Him the gift of love. And that love comes wrapped up in obedience. And if it’s obedience, Beloved, then it’s obedience because you have spent time in His Word and you understand that this is what He

wants, this is what he desires and because you love your Father you're going to obey Him. Let's go back to John chapter 14 because this is a very important passage. If you're marking the text and this is one of the things that we do normally when we go through a book of the Bible and that's what Precepts for Life is all about except at this Christmas season. But one of the things we teach you to do is mark every reference to "love". And well I have a red heart over every reference to love. And as you look at this it's just love, love, love, love, love. This is what Christmas is all about. And this is what the gift is all about that you want to give God. Well He goes on to say this in verse 23, **"Jesus answered and said to [them], 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come and make Our abode with him.'"** (John 14:23) He's saying, "If you really love God, then you're going to keep God's words." And He's saying, "If you love Me and you keep My word then the Father will love you." We say so often that God loves everyone equally. But when you read this passage you can see that those that really love God, those that really obey God, are recipients of His love, because we are loving Him. Then He comes and He reveals Himself to us. He discloses Himself to us. He loves us. It says, **"...and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our abode with him."** (John 14:23) Now when it talks about making an abode with him, it means that you are so at home that you can go any place in that house. Jack and I have house guests quite often. We have them from all over the world because we minister in 121 countries and so people will come in from Moldova and Russia and Spanish-speaking countries and other places in the world. And they will come in and I will tell them "Make yourselves at home." But I want to tell you one thing that they don't do is they don't go into our bedroom. They don't go into my closet. They don't come into my drawers. They make themselves at home, but not all the way. With God, He makes Himself totally, absolutely at home. Everything is open to Him and in every place He is absolutely welcome. That's what it means

for Him to make His abode with us. He says, **“He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine...,”** I’m not just saying this, **“...but the Father’s who sent Me.” (John 14:24)** Do you love Him? Then keep His words. If you don’t keep His words then you can know this, that you’re not loving God. So what are you to do this Christmas season? Well as I’ve suggested you need to read through the gospels. You need to listen to the words of God. You need to listen to the commands that He gives. You need to watch Jesus in operation. You need to be an imitator of Christ. And as you do what you’re saying to God is “God, I love You.” If you’re going to love God you’re going to forgive others. If you’re going to love God you’re going to become a channel for His love. If you’re going to love God then you are going to love the children that are born of Him. I want to take you for one quick minute to 1 John chapter 3. In 1 John chapter 3 in verse 11 it says, **“For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous.” (1 John 3:11-12)** You’re not to be like that. Rather he’s saying that the children of God love their brothers. It says, **“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. [And] everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:14-16)** This is the way that we show that we love God. Go to John chapter 15 and Jesus says in verse 9, **“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also love you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” (John 15:9-10)** He says, **“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)** There’s a day coming;

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it's described for us in Matthew chapter 25; it's a day after Jesus Christ returns to earth as the triumphant King, the Ruler, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. It's the day when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father. [And then Jesus sits on His throne and Jesus begins to judge the peoples that are living at that time. He separates the sheep from the goats. The sheep He puts on His right hand, the goats on His left. And He says, "Because you did it to the least of these My brethren," listen carefully, "you did it to Me." And the sheep enter into eternal life. The goats, they're cast into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and the angels.] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 25:32-46) Why? Because they did not treat God's children properly because they didn't love, and when we love them we're loving God. So what are you going to do this Christmas? You need to love God. You need to show God that you love Him. I love this verse and this is a verse I'm memorizing. It's 14:31 and Jesus said **"...so that the world may know ... I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father [has] commanded Me...."** (John 14:31) I want the world to know that I love the Father and so I'm going to do exactly as the Father commanded me. He commanded us to love one another. He commanded us to keep His commandments. This is the gift of love that you can give to God and it begins by believing in His Son, by obeying the Son, by committing your life to Jesus Christ. That's the way that you show the Father that You really love Him. You receive the gift of His Son. You receive the gift of forgiveness of sins. You receive the gift of eternal life. So that's where loving God begins. I urge you Beloved; receive the gift of God's Son. This is the way you say I love You, God. Just simply say, "God thank You for Jesus Christ. Thank You that He died on the cross for my sins. Thank You for forgiveness. Now Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God and I receive You. I want to live with You and the Father forever and ever."