

PRECEPTS FOR LIFE
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SERIES: Christmas: Receiving And Giving Love

TITLE: Program 1 – Receiving And Giving The Gift Of Christmas Love

MONDAY

OPEN

Oh the magic of Christmas. The smells, the sounds, the decorations, the parties, the food and yet you know what? For many people it is the hardest time of the year. It is the loneliest time of the year and it can be a time of bitter, bitter disappointment. We want to change that. We want you to understand the gift of Christmas love, Beloved, as we open God's Word and find out the real meaning of Christmas so that the magic will be there.

PART ONE

I have to admit, Beloved, that I love Christmas. I absolutely love it. I love changing the house. I love putting up the tree. I love decorating. But most of all what I love about Christmas is what happened to me many years ago when I really had my very very first Christmas. I was saved July 16th, 1963. I went down on my knees and I was in just desperate trouble. My life was such a mess. I was a divorcee with two boys. I was an immoral woman. I

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had tried to be good and I couldn't be good. And on that fateful day when I went down on my knees and I cried out to God, I said, "God, You can do anything that You want with me, anything at all." That was the day that God saved me, that He gave me His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that He turned me from a sinner into one that had been set apart for Him. Well when that first Christmas came all I could think of was the Christmas tree. I could think of the Christmas tree, but I had another Christmas tree in mind. And the Christmas tree that I had in mind was in the shape of a cross. And the words that went through my heart over and over and over again was, "born to die that I might live." I was celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. I was celebrating the birth of the Son of God, the Son of Man, the One who humbled Himself, the One who took upon Himself the form of a servant, the One who became flesh and blood; born to die so that I who was dead might have life, so that I might have a new Father and that my Father might be God Almighty. That was Christmas to me. And I loved sharing it and I loved sharing it with families and with friends and having people over and having fellowship. I know that for some of you that Christmas is just a bitter disappointment. I know for some of you that it is the loneliest time of the year, that if you ever felt unloved, that the time of year that you feel the most unloved is at Christmas. And I think, Precious One, if you'll permit me to say this, that it's because all the magic of Christmas, all the tinsel that the world provides, all the decorations, all the parties and everything only increases your loneliness if you don't feel that you are loved, if you feel like nobody loves you, if you feel so lonely and so all alone, or you look at your husband, you look at your children, and they are really your enemies. You look at your wife and she's turned her back on you. You look at your people at work and you see them and you hear them talking about all this magic of Christmas and you don't have it and so the holiday becomes something that you dread. The holiday is something that causes you in your mind to focus on the terrible void in your life. I want you to know that we have prayed for

you. And my prayer for you is summarized in Paul's prayer for those that were in Ephesus and for all believers. It's in Ephesians chapter 3 and I would like to read it to you. It was Paul's prayer for the believers in Ephesus but it's God's prayer and my prayer for all of us for believers everywhere and even for those who do not know Jesus Christ. Maybe you have a religion but not a relationship. That's what I had. Or maybe Jesus Christ is nothing but a swear word to you and this is the only way that you've heard it or maybe you've looked at Christians and you think that they're just a bunch of hypocrites. Well today I want you to look at Jesus. And we're going to look at God's love for you and how this gift of love came about. I want to start in Ephesians chapter 3, verse 14. And Paul says, **"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."** (Ephesians 3:14-15) If you want to know the essence of family, if you want to know Fatherhood, if you want to know what it is to have a father that loves you with an inexpressible love, with a love that knows no limits, with a love that would pay the greatest price for you, you find it in **"...the Father [of] whom every family in heaven and...earth derives its name..."** (Ephesians 3:14-15) because God Almighty is the epitome of fatherhood. And he goes on to say, **"That He [that God the Father] would grant you, according to the riches of [the] His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man...."** (Ephesians 3:16) This is what I want to happen to you today. I want you, Precious One, to be strengthened with God's power in the inner man so that no matter what goes on outside, no matter whether Christmas isn't everything that you expected it to be or the decorations aren't as pretty as you've seen someone else have or the presents aren't as nice, you will be **"...strengthened with power...in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..."** (Ephesians 3:16-17) and that's by embracing this message from the Word of God as truth, absolute truth. **"So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, [now**

watch] **being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and [the] length and [the] height and [the] depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge....” (Ephesians 3:17-19)** My prayer for you, Precious One, is that God will take this teaching, this truth and he will just wrap you in all these wonderful truths. That you will “**...be strengthened...in [your] inner man...,” (Ephesians 3:16)** that you will feel the love of God just flowing through you and that you will know that you are beloved of God, beloved of God, that you will be rooted and grounded in love. (PARAPHRASE, Ephesians 3:17) that you will [“know the love of God that surpasses knowledge and that you will be filled up to all the fullness of God.”] (Paraphrase, Ephesians 3:19) This is my prayer for you. All right in the light of that what I want you to see and to understand is that God planned this gift of love [before the foundation of the world.] (PARAPHRASE, Ephesians 1:4) Before God ever spoke and brought the world into existence, do you know what? He planned to give you the gift of love which is Jesus Christ. We’re celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Don’t listen to the society when they say, “Happy Holidays”. I want to tell you something. Happiness is short lived. Happiness goes with the circumstances. I don’t want you to have happy holidays. I want you to have a blessed Christmas. Christ is C-h-r-i-s-t, Christmas. I want you to have a life that is filled with the love of God. And you have to know that God planned to give you this gift of love in His perfect timing. In Ephesians chapter 1, in verse 3 it says, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in...Christ [Jesus].” (Ephesians 1:3)** Now when we think of Jesus at Christmas, we think of Jesus as a baby. But now we know Him no longer as a baby. We know Him no longer as hanging on a cross but we know Him as the resurrected Christ who has ascended to the Father who sits at the right hand of God and ever lives to make intercession for you. Do you realize that right now that Jesus is praying for you? That as you listen to

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this program, He's praying for you because He tells us in Ephesians chapter 1, in verse 4, **"Just as He [God, God the Father] chose us in Him [in Christ when] before the foundation of the world...."** (Ephesians 1:4) So before He ever spoke and brought the world into existence, Precious One, He chose you. Now He didn't choose to reveal Himself to me until I was 29 years of age. So you're going to do your math real quickly aren't you and you're going to find out okay, how old I am because I was saved when I was 29 and it was July 16th, 1963. Do your math but do it later, all right? Now He saved you. He saved you when He wanted to save you. He could have saved me as a child but He didn't give me the gift of His love or the gift of His Son until July 16th, 1963. When did it happen to you? And you say, "I don't know. I, I'm not really sure. I go to church and I do my best but I'm really not sure that if I were to die I would go to heaven." O Beloved, this Christmas is going to be so different because this Christmas, you can be sure. Today you can receive the gift of God's Son. You can look at that Christmas tree and see another tree in front of it and that's the tree where Jesus was hung. The Bible says, **"...Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."** Galatians 3:13, KJV) And then it says that [Jesus was made a curse for us.] (PARAPHRASE, Galatians 3:13) He was made sin for you, hung on God's Christmas tree, the cross, so that you and I could have forgiveness of sins. That's what Christmas is all about. And when did God plan it? It says, **"...He chose [you] in [Christ] before the foundation of the world...."** (Ephesians 1:4) And yet there was a time, just as there's a day that we celebrate Christmas, December 25th. So God had a day and I want you to see that Christmas is not only planned but Christmas is also a time when a process is begun, the process of making known to you salvation as a free gift, the gift of love. So He chose you before the foundation of the world. If He chose you in Christ, then before the foundation of the world, God planned the death of Jesus Christ for you. We'll talk about it more in just a minute.

PART TWO

You sit in your living room. You have your decorations around you and as you look at them, Beloved, this is what you planned. You said this is what I want to do and you got the materials and whatever was necessary in order to decorate your home. God planned Christmas as we saw. He planned it before the foundation of the world. In John 3:16 it said, **“...God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, [so] that whoever [would] believe in Him [would] not perish, but have [everlasting] life.” (John 3:16)** Now when he said, **“He gave His...Son...,” (John 3:16)** he’s talking about the birth of Jesus Christ, the life of Jesus Christ and the death of Jesus Christ. But it all has to have a beginning and so consequently we go to Galatians chapter 4 and I want you to turn in your Bibles if you’re able, if you’re in a safe place where you can stop and open your Bible. But it’s so important to me that you see this truth for yourself. So if you didn’t get down Ephesians chapter 3, verses 14-19, I want to make sure that you write those down and that you read those verses. But now let’s go to Galatians chapter 4, verse 4 and it says this. **“But when the fullness of...time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive...adoption as sons...[in the fullness of time.]” (Galatians 4:4-5)** It’s the fullness of time. Today is the fullness of time. Today is the time when God in His sovereignty has you listening to these words of truth from the Word of God. Today is the day when God is saying to you so very clearly, “I love you. I love you and I have planned your redemption. I love you and I want you to know that this is a process that I began before the foundation of the world. But I started the actual coming of My Son in the fullness of time.” Almost 2000 years ago, Beloved, Jesus was born, born so that you and I who are dead might live. And so he wants us to understand that but he also wants us to understand that there was a purpose in the

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coming of Jesus Christ. There was a purpose and I want you to see this purpose and I want you to understand it, especially in a day when we elevate men and when we honor them beyond really what they should be honored, where we have almost a hero worship. Well in Matthew chapter 20, in verse 28, we read this Scripture, Matthew chapter 20 and it is verse 28. And it says, **“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served,”** [to be ministered unto,] **“but to serve,”** [to minister,] **“and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28)** I want you to just sometime go to your Christmas tree and take your Bible and put your Bible at the foot of that Christmas tree as a present from God. And I want you to visualize it under the tree. And as you look at that tree remember, we’re celebrating. We’re celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. We’re celebrating the coming of the Son of God, the One who has come **“...not...to be served, but to serve...,”** the One who has come **“...to give His life [as] a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28)** And I want you to remember chapter 1 as you look at this. In John chapter 1, this is what it says, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being [by] Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being...,” (John 1:1-3)** except what He has made. He made you. But then in the fullness of time, go down to chapter 1 verse 14, in the fullness of time, **“...the Word became flesh...”** And it says, **“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we [beheld] His glory...as of the only begotten [of] the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)** So take that Bible, put it at the base of the Christmas tree and sanctify in a sense, that Christmas tree. Make it a symbol of the joy that comes in the One who came **“...not...to be served, but to serve...”** but also **“...to give His life [as] a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28)** And you might do that on Christmas Eve. You might sit down with your family and read the Christmas story. But if I read the Christmas story I would read in Luke, let’s say about the birth of Jesus Christ. But then I would go to the

end of Luke or to the end of John, or Mark, or Matthew, and I would read about the death of Jesus Christ, because I want you to see that Christmas was planned for you, that there is a process to Christmas but that Christmas also has a purpose and that is that Jesus came to give His life a ransom for many. But finally I want you to see that Christmas has a price. The price of Christmas: Jesus was born to die. And the price of Christmas is that [God loved you so much that He would give His Son for you.] (PARAPHRASE, John 3:16)] We saw that in John chapter 3, verse 16 and I want to go back there in just a minute. But before we go back there I want to read Romans chapter 8 to you and I want you to understand that this is God's gift and God's message to you today. **"...We know that God [keeps on causing] all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are [the] called according to [God's] purpose." (Romans 8:28)** When God saves you He has a purpose for your life and it says, **"For those whom He foreknew, He...predestined [He marked out beforehand] to become conformed to the image of His Son...." (Romans 8:29)** He wants you to become more like Him and He's going to use everything in your life to do this. And then it says, **"And...whom He predestined, He...called; and...whom He called, He...justified; and...whom He justified, He...glorified." (Romans 8:30)** He means, He says "If I saved you I want you to know that I save you once and for all and that I'm going to take you to heaven with Me," and you and I are going to come back down to this earth and we're going to live on this earth and Jesus is going to rule and reign as King of kings and you are going to be there ruling and reigning with Him. And so He says, **"What...shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who [can be] against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him [up] for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32)** John 3:16, **"...God so loved the world...,**" and I want you to put your name there, **"...that He gave His only begotten Son...." (John 3:16)** If you haven't received Jesus yet, if you

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haven't received the gift of life, the gift of love, then I want you to say,
"God, thank You for loving me. Thank You for giving Your Son for me.
Thank You that He was born to die to pay for my sins. I confess that I'm a
sinner and I confess that I need Your love. I need Your gift of Your Son. I
need forgiveness and I'm going to believe the Word. I'm going to embrace
the Word. And right now I tell You, God, I want to receive Jesus Christ as
my Lord, my God, my Master. I want to serve You and I thank You in faith
for the gift of eternal life, for the gift of love, Your love."