

What do you enjoy about Christmas the most? Is it the food? Well, we all like a good meal. It's gotta be all the family that invades our personal space and sits in "our chair" the entire time and gives our children way too much candy and then leaves us with the sugar crazed creature they have created... I can only imagine their giggles and snickers as they leave to the peace and quiet of their own abode. If those two are not your most favorite moments of the holiday season—then what is? Oh I know...IT'S THE GIFT(S) YOU RECEIVE!!!!

Isn't it a wonderful thing to receive a gift, but what about giving a gift? To give a gift because a person is moved to give the gift with no sense of obligation is a meaningful act. The more significant the gift is to the giver, the more the giver honors the receiver. It is important to know how to receive with appreciation as it is to give with honor. Those who have the hardest time learning this lesson are those who spend their life giving. Let me share some scripture with you. John 6:31-40, "Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, *'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'*" <sup>32</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." <sup>35</sup> And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup> This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup> And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

There is a distinct difference between the Christmas gift and an impromptu gift. With the Christmas gift, one feels they must have a gift for the one who gave them a gift. Also with the Christmas gift, we give with the expectation of receiving. Often times we find ourselves more concerned with what we spend on a gift or gifts than the realization of the gift we are giving. We feel that we should wear the "dancing kitty sweater" or the "polyester tie" so the giver of the gift knows we appreciate the gift, even though the reality is...we do not and it quickly finds its way to the back of the closet. The impromptu gift is unexpected. It is given solely upon the basis that the giver wishes to give the gift. The receiver then feels a sense of honor and the gift is cherished because of what it represents.

What we miss in life sometimes is the greatest impromptu gift of our lives. Oh, we may realize it from time to time, but for many this gift is treated like the "dancing kitty sweater" and quickly forgotten. What God did for us in sending Jesus literally is beyond our frail human comprehension. God did not act out of obligation, but out of His desire that all mankind should be able to choose to accept so great a salvation. In God's gift there is life eternal. I pray all are willing to accept this wonderful gift and live a faithful life in Christ.

In Christ,

Joe Rhodes