

Giving Gifts at Christmas



Giving gifts during the Christmas season has become a big part of our celebration of the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Children look forward with excited anticipation to the wonderful opening of the packages under the tree. Parents make their lists and search the stores. Friends prepare for the event with joy while lovers nervously plan for that special something. Sometimes we even give gifts to complete strangers! Why all this focus on giving and receiving presents? Is there a reason we give gifts to others while we celebrate the birthday of Jesus?

Why do we give gifts at Christmas time?

Though the origins of gift-giving at Christmas are varied, we do know that the Wise Men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12). Their desire to honour and worship the Coming King of Kings was made evident in the extravagant gifts they brought to this Heavenly Child. These astrologers from the east brought valuable items from their home countries far away, somewhere in Arabia, India or North Africa. These three things, though more common today, can teach us some important lessons in gift-giving at Christmas.

GOLD

Gold still has great value today. It is a commodity that some investors prefer for its security and lasting value. Because of its rarity, it has commonly been associated with kings. . . and Christ is the King of Kings! What young man hasn't dreamed about finding that hidden treasure of gold?! What young woman hasn't dreamed about putting some of it around her neck or on her finger?! Gold has financial value and when we think of money and material wealth, we also see many around us who are less fortunate. There are people in our community who, for varied reasons, are suffering in poverty. **This Christmas, we have an opportunity to give – just like the Wise Men!** Jesus said that when we give to others in need, it's as if we are giving to Him (Matthew 25:40-45). James tells us that true religion is really looking after orphans and widows (James 1:22). The sacrifice that God is looking for is really a practical out-pouring of kindness to others in our community (Isaiah 58:6-11). This Christmas, why not think of how you can give to someone in your **community?**

FRANKINCENSE

Frankincense, literally translated, is a high-quality incense. The oil comes from the sap of the Boswellia tree which is only found in southern Arabia, India and northern Africa. It has medicinal qualities as well as religious significance. Frankincense can be used to relieve stress and anxiety. It is used to relieve pain and inflammation. It is also used to boost immunity. It has become a symbol of holiness and righteousness and is thus used in worship around the world. Frankincense is most noted for its fragrant odor and pleasant aroma. Psalm 133 says,

“Behold, **how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!** It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.” These days, families getting along together are rare! When we think of giving gifts to family, it is important that we give with hearts that are open and pure. Jesus said that before we bring our gift to the altar, we should make sure that our hearts are right with others and we have forgiven those whom we need to forgive (Matthew 5:23-24). This Christmas, why not think of how you can give the sweet gift of unity and forgiveness to someone in your **family?**

MYRRH

Myrrh, likewise, is an extract from the Commiphora tree. It is also used as a perfume, incense and medicine. In the book of Exodus, it was used as a sacred anointing oil consecrating the tabernacle, its articles and its workers (Exodus 30:23-38). It has long since been used as a healing salve for abrasions and skin irritations, as well as an antiseptic in mouth washes and tooth powders. Most notably, it was offered to Christ while he was on the cross in the form of a mixture with wine (Mark 15:23) and then used as a means of preparing his body for burial (John 19:39). How interesting that myrrh was a gift given to Christ both at the beginning and end of His life! In the Bible, the Church is called the Body of Christ. We have the opportunity to bring the healing effect of myrrh when we reach out to each other in love. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” What could you do this Christmas that would bring healing and comfort to someone in the Body of Christ, the **Church?**

The Greatest Gift

Of course, while we think about giving and receiving gifts, we remember the Greatest Gift ever given, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. When the Father saw the terrible plight of sin destroying His creation, He planned that He himself should come in the form of a man, the Incarnate Christ, and in becoming one of us, he offered himself up on the Cross to become the payment for our sins! I cannot think of a greater Gift, or of a greater Gift-Giver! This Christmas, worship Him with your gifts to your **community**, your **family**, and your **Church**.