

Christmas: Giving and Receiving Gifts

Step One: We admitted that we were powerless over our dependencies -- that our life had become unmanageable. **Step Two:** We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. **Step Three:** We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

Do you want more and more of God's kindness and peace? Then learn to know him better and better. For as you know him better, he will give you, through his great power, everything you need for living a truly good life. He even shares his own glory and his own goodness with you!... Learn to know God better and discover what he wants you to do. Next, learn to put aside your own desires so that you will become patient and godly, gladly letting God have his way with you. This will make possible the next step, which is for you to enjoy other people and to like them, and finally you will grow to love them deeply.
(Excerpts from 2 Peter 1)

We are offered the gift of forgiveness and new life through faith in Jesus Christ. It is a gift that no one deserves. God is good! Experiencing God's kindness and peace depends on how well we know him. Sometimes we expect peace to come before we make healthy choices but actually, grace and peace come when we concentrate on getting to know God. Even in this regard God has taken the initiative to come close to us, in a way that we can know and understand. That's what the gift of Christmas is all about. God knew we needed a Savior and a healer and a trusted companion. He sent Jesus to deal with sin and suffering and to walk with us through our pain to healing and wholeness of life.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. ... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called "Wonderful Counsellor", "Mighty God", "Everlasting Father", "Prince of Peace." (Excerpts from Isaiah 9)

God is the one to whom we can turn for deep healing and recovery. He is Wonderful, without equal. He is the Counselor, who can help us sort through our inner mess and guide us into truth and reality. He is the Mighty God, who can supply us with the power to stay on the path of recovery. He is the Everlasting Father, who can love us more deeply than any earthly father can. He is the Prince of Peace, who can fill our mind with peace and our life with wholeness. God offers us the gift of Himself, the one who meets our every need.

The angel said, "She (Mary) will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means "God with us."
(Excerpts from Matthew 1)

We receive lasting comfort by putting our trust in God, who is always with us. Sometimes God gives us immediate deliverance from a painful situation. Sometimes He walks with us as we work with problems that just won't seem to let go. Our pain may be a direct consequence of the mistakes we have made in the past; or it may be the result of someone else's failure. When we place our trust in Jesus, we receive his peace in both this life and the next. God sees. God cares. God knows. God delivers.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What is it about Christmas and gifts that children enjoy?
2. What is a gift that has touched me deeply?
3. What is a gift that I have given that has given me the most pleasure?
4. What gifts does God offer to us?
5. How do we receive the spiritual gifts that God is trying to hand over to us?
6. What keeps me from actually receiving the gifts of God?