



alive

*magazine*  
December '24

THE GIFT  
THAT  
CHANGED  
THE  
WORLD

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WHAT IS THE

# INDESCRIBABLE GIFT

IN 2 CORINTHIANS 9:15?



BY: GOTQUESTIONS.ORG

AliveToGod.com | December 2024



*A*fter teaching on the benefits of generous, open-hearted giving, Paul ends with this encouragement: “Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves [by giving to the poor], others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them [the recipients of the contribution] and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:13–15).

Both Jewish and Gentile believers—fruits of the combined ministries of Paul, Barnabas, Peter, James, and John—were involved in sending financial contributions to the poor among the church in Jerusalem (see 1 Corinthians 16:1–4; Romans 15:26; Galatians 2:9–10). In 2 Corinthians 8:1–9:15, the apostle Paul encouraged the believers in Corinth to give generously and to stick to their commitment, for they had grown slack and irregular in setting aside money for the collection (see 2 Corinthians 8:10–11).

*P*aul wanted the Corinthians to understand the far-reaching consequences of their giving. Believers everywhere would see their obedience and how they honoured God through their giving. They would prove the sincerity of their love for God and for other Christians (2 Corinthians 8:8; 1 John 4:20) and thus demonstrate the genuineness of their faith in Jesus Christ. As a result, believers all over the world would be praying for the Corinthians because their hearts would be moved by the surpassing grace God had given them. The very idea caused Paul to erupt with thanksgiving and praise to God for His indescribable gift!

What is this indescribable gift? It is the surpassing grace of God given to all who accept His salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life in Jesus Christ.

After the fall of humanity, when Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, all people were born into sin and destined for death (Romans 6:20-23). Only through God's indescribable gift of grace, which is Christ's life, His sacrificial death on the cross, and His subsequent resurrection from the dead, can people be forgiven of sin, redeemed from death, and given everlasting life. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

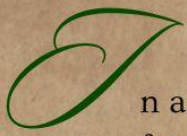




Although the gift is too marvellous words, Paul attempted to describe it to the Romans: “But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins” (Romans 5:15-16, NLT).



When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, God’s indescribable gift of grace “freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins” (Romans 3:22-24, NLT; see also Ephesians 1:7-8; Titus 2:11-14).



In another passage, Paul explained, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8; see also Ephesians 2:4–5). God’s indescribable gift is His unmerited favour. We don’t deserve this gift, and there’s nothing we can do to earn it (see Romans 5:6–8; 9:14–16; 11:5–6; Titus 3:4–7; Acts 15:11). All we can do is receive God’s gracious gift with humility and trust (Luke 18:9–14; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Timothy 1:15–16).



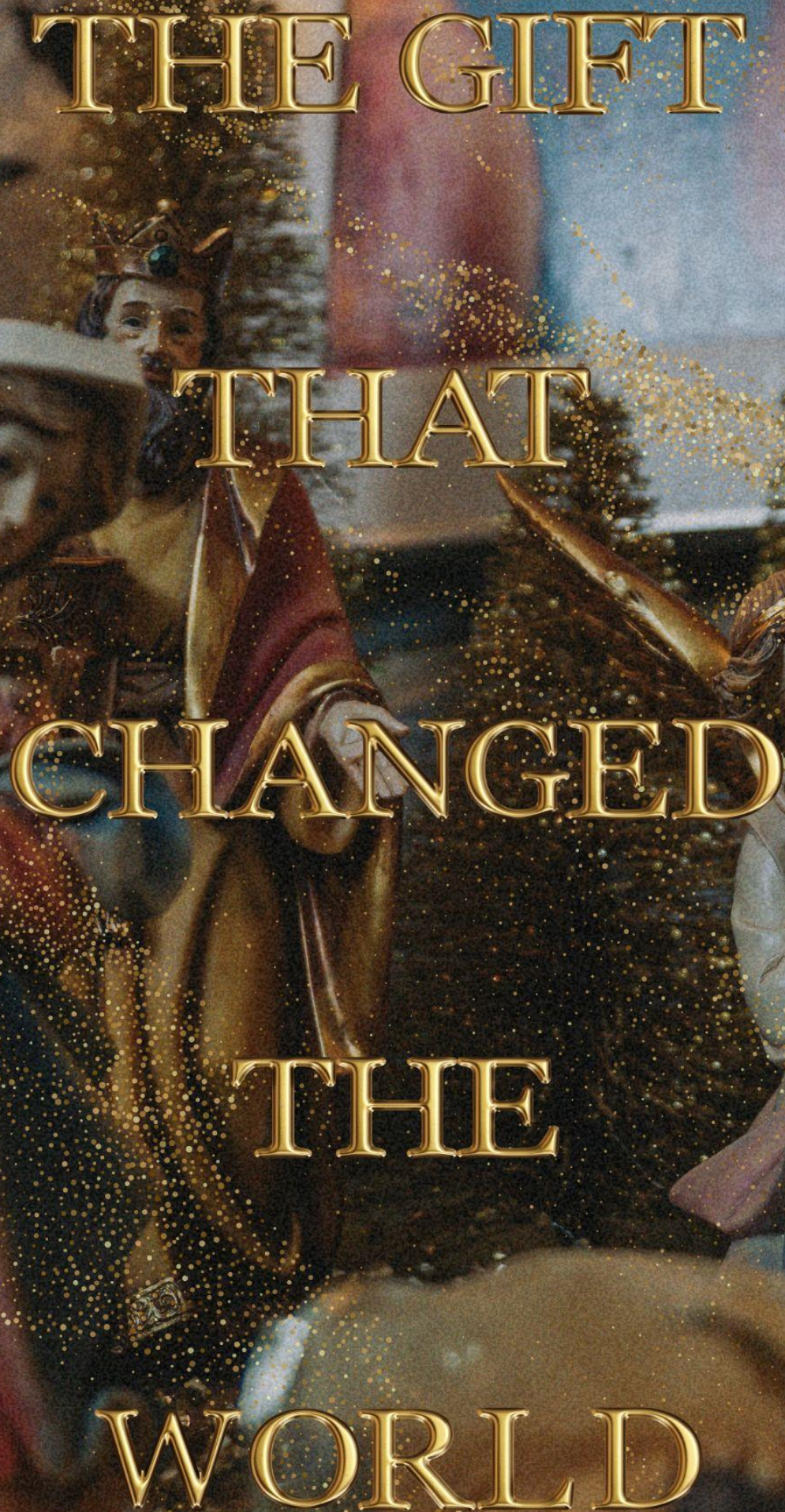




*T*he indescribable gift is

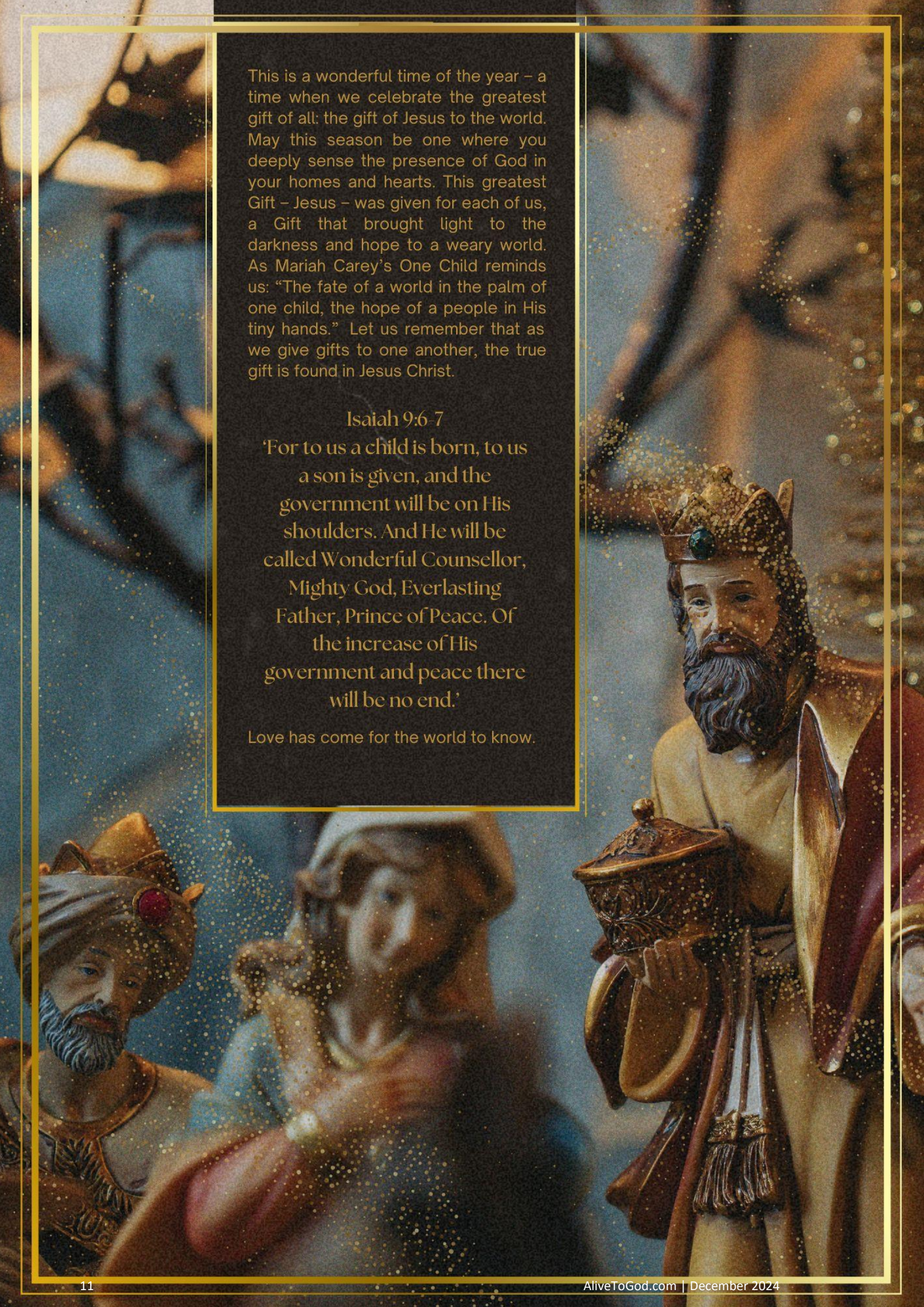
*God's Own Son, Jesus Christ,*

who gave His life so that we might live for Him and with Him forever. He is our example in everything, including generous gift giving: "You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9, NLT). Inspired by the lavish outpouring of God's grace in our lives, we ought to always give generous gifts with joy in our hearts.



THE GIFT  
THAT  
CHANGED  
THE  
WORLD

By: Andrew Roebert



This is a wonderful time of the year – a time when we celebrate the greatest gift of all: the gift of Jesus to the world. May this season be one where you deeply sense the presence of God in your homes and hearts. This greatest Gift – Jesus – was given for each of us, a Gift that brought light to the darkness and hope to a weary world. As Mariah Carey’s One Child reminds us: “The fate of a world in the palm of one child, the hope of a people in His tiny hands.” Let us remember that as we give gifts to one another, the true gift is found in Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 9:6-7

‘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. Of  
the increase of His  
government and peace there  
will be no end.’

Love has come for the world to know.

# THE GREATEST GIFT TO MARY

Luke 1:28-35

Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Congratulations, favored lady! The Lord is with you!" Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be frightened, Mary," the angel told her, "for God has decided to wonderfully bless you! Very soon now, you will become pregnant and have a baby boy, and you are to name Him 'Jesus.' He shall be very great and shall be called the Son of God. And the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His ancestor David. And He shall reign over Israel forever; His Kingdom shall never end!" Mary asked the angel, "But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin." The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of God shall overshadow you; so the baby born to you will be utterly holy – the Son of God."

Many had longed for what was about to happen to Mary. She was chosen to carry the Messiah. The Bible highlights three things about Mary:

1. She was a favoured lady.
2. The Lord was with her.
3. God had decided to wonderfully bless her.

The greatest gift to Mary was the fact that she would carry the hope of the world. This reminds us of how one child could bring such light to humanity.

## THE GREATEST GIFT TO THE ANGELS

This must have been an exciting time for the angels – Heaven was abuzz with anticipation. During this season, we see the greatest amount of angelic activity: visiting Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds.

Luke 1:38

Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to do whatever He wants. May everything you said come true." And then the angel disappeared.

Luke 2:10-11

the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone! The Saviour – yes, the Messiah, the Lord – has been born tonight in Bethlehem!"

The angels proclaimed that hope had come, echoing the truth that "When a miracle comes in the form of a child," everything changes. Imagine being used to announce that Jesus was on earth!



# THE GREATEST GIFT TO THE SHEPHERDS

Luke 2:8-15

That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly an angel appeared among them, and the landscape shone bright with the glory of the Lord. They were badly frightened, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone! The Saviour – yes, the Messiah, the Lord – has been born tonight in Bethlehem! How will you recognize Him? You will find a baby wrapped in a blanket, lying in a manger!" Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others – the armies of heaven – praising God: "Glory to God in the highest heaven," they sang, "and peace on earth for all those pleasing him." When this great army of angels had returned again to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on! Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

This was surely a night different to other nights for the shepherds. The shepherds experienced an extraordinary night:

An angel appeared to them.  
The landscape shone with God's glory.  
An angel had spoken to them.  
A host of angels sang.

The shepherds, though humble and overlooked, were chosen to be the first witnesses of Christ's birth, experiencing the truth that "One Child can change the world." The greatest night was to be a night to which the shepherds were invited.

# THE GREATEST GIFT TO THE WISE MEN

The wise men had been watching for the signs, and they journeyed far to meet the Saviour. A star that had appeared drew them. A star that would lead them to the Messiah.



Matthew 2:1-11

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He Who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." The star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother and fell down and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

They followed the light to find the Light of the world, fulfilling the truth that Jesus was born for all – rich or poor, near or far. Today, wise men still seek Him.

## THE GREATEST GIFT TO THE INN KEEPER

There was a man who owned an inn. Little did he know that that night the Saviour of the world would come to his door. The greatest gift of all was delivered to his doorstep. But he had no room for Him. There are many still today who have no room in their hearts for the greatest gift of all.

Luke 2:6-7

The time came for her baby to be born; and she gave birth to her first child, a Son. She wrapped Him in a blanket and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn.

Perhaps the door of your heart has been closed to the greatest gift of all. Wouldn't you consider opening your heart and let the greatest gift of all into your life?

## THE GREATEST GIFT TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world the Lord is come. This was the message of the angels then, and nothing has changed. It is still the greatest news. The greatest gift to the world was born in Bethlehem and He is still available to us today.



Isaiah 9:5-6

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given;  
and the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His Name will be called Wonderful,  
Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace and of the increase of His  
government and peace there will be no end.

Jesus still remains the greatest gift the world has ever received. The birth of Jesus is the gift that changed the course of humanity. As the song says, "The hope of a people in His tiny hands," Jesus is the hope of the world.

## THE GREATEST GIFT TO THE MAN IN THE TEMPLE

One of the greatest stories for me is the story of Simeon. He had known, waited and expected Jesus to come.— It happened as he had hoped.

Luke 2: 25-33

That day a man named Simeon, a Jerusalem resident, was in the Temple. He was a good man, very devout, filled with the Holy Spirit and constantly expecting the Messiah to come soon. For the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen Him – God's anointed King. The Holy Spirit had impelled him to go to the Temple that day; and so, when Mary and Joseph arrived to present the baby Jesus to the Lord in obedience to the law, Simeon was there and took the Child in his arms, praising God. "Lord," he said, "now I can die content! For I have seen Him as You promised me I would. I have seen the Saviour You have given to the world. He is the Light that will shine upon the nations, and He will be the glory of Your people Israel!" Joseph and Mary just stood there, marveling at what was being said about Jesus.

Here the man who had waited for this for so long was holding the hope of the world in his hands. God wants to give Himself to you today.



# THE GREATEST GIFT TO YOU AND ME

The greatest joy is to know Jesus' love inside our own hearts.

John 3:16-17

For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son so that anyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.

God gave His only Son. The same gift is being offered to you today. It only remains for you to receive Him. The gift of Jesus is for you and me." God gave His Son, and it is up to us to receive Him and embrace the life He offers.

# GOD WITH US IS GOD'S GIFT TO US

Matthew 1:23

'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son. They shall call His Name Emmanuel, which means God with us.'

Jesus came to show us that God is with us. We can know the abiding presence of God in our lives. God has no intention of leaving us or deserting us.

Deuteronomy 31:6

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Nothing can separate us from His love for us.

Romans 8:35-39

Who then can ever keep Christ's love from us? When we have trouble or calamity, when we are hunted down or destroyed, is it because He doesn't love us anymore? And if we are hungry or penniless or in danger or threatened with death, has God deserted us? ... Despite all this, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ Who loved us enough to die for us. For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels won't, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God's love away. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, or where we are – high above the sky, or in the deepest ocean – nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The gift of Jesus and His love for you is still available to you. As Mariah Carey's song reflects: "One Child that saves us, each one of us."

In Conclusion:

This Christmas, let us remember the Gift that changed the world. The birth of one Child – Jesus Christ – brought light, hope, and redemption to all humanity. May His love fill your hearts and your homes this season.



# READY FOR CHRISTMAS?

B Y : M A R R I A G E M I S S I O N S . C O M

*ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS? IS THIS TOO EARLY FOR YOU; OR ARE YOU ONE WHO GETS READY FOR CHRISTMAS EARLIER, RATHER THAN LATER? NO MATTER WHAT THE TIMING, WE HOPE YOU TRY TO CUT DOWN ON THE STRESS OF PREPARING. THAT'S NOT WHAT CHRISTMAS IS ALL ABOUT. DECORATING, PREPARING FOOD AND FESTIVITIES, AND BUYING GIFTS CAN BE FUN ACTIVITIES. BUT KEEP IT ALL IN PERSPECTIVE.*

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Here's a good tip to keep in mind as you "get ready for Christmas":

*"WHAT DO YOU WANT AND NEED TO DO BETWEEN NOW AND CHRISTMAS? DECIDE WHAT HAS TO BE DONE AND WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO BE DONE. AND THEN SEE IF IT'S REALISTICALLY GOING TO FIT INTO THE DAYS AHEAD. IF IT'S NOT GOING TO FIT, CUT SOME THING(S) OUT AND SCHEDULED AGAIN. AND THEN KEEP CUTTING TILL IT ALL FITS EASILY. THE GOAL IS TO NOT BE SO BUSY AND STRESSED YOU MISS OUT ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT—GOD, FAMILY, AND GIVING TO OTHERS..." (PAUL BYERLY)*

And then here's a tip from Paul's wife Lori:



*"MOST OF US WILL BE DOING SOME DECORATING FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS. MAY I SUGGEST A BIT OF RESTRAINT? START WITH THE SIMPLEST, MOST BASIC OF DECORATIONS; AND THEN ADD AS YOU HAVE THE TIME AND ENERGY. IF YOU DON'T GET EVERYTHING SET OUT, NO HARM DONE. MOST IMPORTANTLY, DECORATE YOUR FACE WITH A SMILE. BE WARM AND PATIENT WITH YOUR FAMILY."*

We hope this takes a bit of the pressure off your Christmas preparations. But...

## IT TAKES MORE THAN THAT TO GET READY FOR CHRISTMAS

More importantly, we want to ask you: is your HEART ready for Christmas? When you get together with friends and relatives this Christmas season, will they see Christ in you? Concerning this matter, we read something in Brant Hansen's book, "Unoffendable" that has

*"impacted us. We hope it will impact you too. And we hope it will challenge you.*

*"ONE EVENING, STANDING BY THE POND, A TIPSY FINNISH GUY (HE AND HIS WIFE WERE DRINKING WHILE MOVING OUT, TIRED OF THE INHOSPITABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD) TOLD ME—I SWEAR I'M NOT MAKING THIS UP—'I'VE LOOKED OUTSIDE AND SEEN YOUR FAMILY. I'VE WATCHED YOU. AND WHEN I SEE YOUR FAMILY, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY, BUT I THINK ABOUT GOD."*

That's really convicting, isn't it? Do others think about God when they see how you interact with your spouse and family?

Again, is your heart ready for Christmas? Do you let the love of Christ shine in you and through you?



## THE MARRIAGE CHALLENGE

How about in your marriage? Does your spouse experience the love of Christ in the way you interact with him or her? And how about others? Will anyone see God, whose very name is LOVE working in and THROUGH your married lives?

Are you communicating the gospel with and without words? Keep in mind that your married lives are to be a testimony to draw others to Christ. Will they experience the grace of God while they're with you? So:

*"WHEN YOU'RE MAKING CHRISTMAS PLANS, REMEMBER THAT YOUR MARRIAGE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ALL THE FUSS. MAKE SURE YOU DO THINGS TO MAKE YOUR MARRIAGE SMOOTHER, NOT TO PUT BUMPS ON THE ROAD. IF THAT MEANS DOING CHRISTMAS SMALLER, DO IT. BUT KEEP THE FOCUS WHERE IT SHOULD BE: THAT WE HAVE A LOVING GOD WHO LEFT PARADISE TO LIVE AMONG US, SO HE COULD MAKE A WAY FOR US TO LIVE FOREVER WITH HIM." (SHEILA WRAY GREGOIRE)*



In all our busyness, isn't that really the bottom line? Isn't Christmas much more than the wrappings, preparations, and trappings? Isn't it about letting Jesus shine forth as we celebrate His birthday? And then what about throughout the year? Isn't it about "living Christ" throughout the year so others will want to know our God better?

So, on this note, we came upon a poem written years ago by an unknown author, which we adapted for our Christmas Marriage Insight to you. We pray it will speak to your heart as it has ours.

### **Are You Ready for Christmas?**

"Ready for Christmas!" she said with a sigh,  
as she gave a last touch to the gifts piled high.

She wearily sat for a moment to read  
till soon, very soon, she was nodding her head.

Then quickly spoke a voice in her dream,  
"Ready for Christmas? What do you mean?  
Ready for CHRIST, when only this week  
not one nice thing to your spouse did you speak."

"Ready for Christmas, while holding a grudge?

Why, how can the CHRIST CHILD come and abide

in a heart that is selfish and filled with pride?

Ready for Christmas, when only today  
your spouse needed love and you turned him away—

without even a smile to show that you cared?

The little he asked —it could have been spared.

Ready for Christmas, your circle's too small.

Why, you're not ready for Christmas at all!"  
She awoke with a start, and a cry of despair.

"There's so little time I still have to prepare!

O FATHER, forgive me, I see what you mean.

To be ready means more than a house that's swept clean."

Yes, more than the giving of gifts and a tree,

it's the heart swept clean that HE wants to see,

a heart that is free from bitterness and sin,  
ready for Christmas—and ready for HIM!



# ARE YOU TRULY READY?

Truly think about whether you're ready for Christmas. If you have bitterness and unforgiveness in your heart, you're not ready for the Christ of Christmas. He wants to help you clean up that. If you have self-centeredness in your attitude, you aren't ready for the Christ of Christmas. Again, He is ready to help you clean up that.

It tells us in the Bible that we're to have the same attitude "as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:5-8).

Do you have that same attitude?

If things become more important than people, you're forgetting what Christ came on this earth to give to us. We're to be using things and loving people –not the other way around.



## READY? SIMPLIFY!

We urge you to simplify your Christmas. The greatest gift you can give your spouse and everyone you're with this Christmas (and throughout the year) is the gift of the Love of Christ.

We believe Jim Burns got it right when he said:

*"I'VE DECLARED THIS CHRISTMAS THE 'CHRISTMAS OF MY FIRST LOVE' WHERE I'LL HELP MY SPOUSE AND OUR FAMILY SHIFT OUR FOCUS FROM THE MALL TO THE MANGER. THE MANGER IS QUIET AND LESS CROWDED. IT'S A PLACE WHERE CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS WELCOME. SPENDING TIME HERE WILL HELP OUR FAMILY TO KEEP OUR EYES AND HEARTS FULLY FOCUSED ON JESUS." (JIM BURNS)*

"Fully focused on Jesus!" That should be our focus, no doubt!





## SO, ARE YOU TRULY READY?

Being truly ready for Christmas comes down to something a Pastor Daniel Wright wrote in an article on this very matter (titled, "Ready for CHRISTmas?"). He couldn't have summed it up any better!

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*"CHRISTMAS SHOULD BE A JOYOUS OCCASION SPENT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS. BUT THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT A BABY BORN IN A MANGER. THE ONE WHO WAS CALLED EMMANUEL, WHICH MEANS GOD IS WITH US.*

*"HE CAME FOR A PURPOSE! THAT PURPOSE WAS TO SAVE AND REDEEM US FROM OUR SINS. JOHN 3:16 SAYS, 'FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.' (KJV)*

*"I [WE] WANT TO ONCE AGAIN ASK THIS QUESTION, ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS? IF YOU STOOD BEFORE HIM TODAY, WOULD YOU BE READY? HAVE YOU ACCEPTED HIM AS LORD AND SAVIOR? THIS IS WHAT CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT. THIS IS THE ONLY REASON HE CAME. REMEMBER CHRISTMAS IS NOT ABOUT A GIFT UNDER A TREE, IT'S ABOUT A GIFT THAT DIED ON A TREE!"*

Please know our love and prayers are with you as together we work on our marriages so they will be a living testimony to the love of Christ all year long.  
Cindy and Steve Wright

# TIMELESS CHRISTIAN RESOURCES



[RoebertMinistries.co.za](http://RoebertMinistries.co.za)

# FREE DAILY BIBLE VERSE



[AliveToGod.com](http://AliveToGod.com)



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WHETHER YOU HAVE A PRAYER REQUEST BURNING IN YOUR HEART OR SIMPLY WANT TO OFFER SUPPORT TO OTHERS THROUGH PRAYER, THIS IS THE PLACE.

## Prayer Community

[HTTPS://ALIVETOGOD.COM/PRAY/](https://alivetogod.com/pray/)

We also encourage you to extend your support to others by lifting them up in prayer. It's as simple as clicking the "I PRAYED FOR THIS" button, and a notification will be sent to them, letting them know that someone is holding them in prayer.

Together, through our collective prayers and support, we can create a community filled with warmth, love, and genuine care. Thank you for being a part of it!



**IMPACT 103**  
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