Christmas is only a couple of days away… Have you purchased all of your gifts yet?

Is it just me or does it seem that Christmas gift buying gets more difficult as the years go on, especially as the children get older.

I miss the days when the cardboard tube from a paper towel roll made for hours of fun.

Men seem to especially struggle sometimes with gift purchasing, so I thought it might be helpful to start our time together today, with some helpful tips on what men **should not** buy their wives or girl friends.

This way if you’ve already bought something on the “not so wise list”,

you still have a couple of days to return it and get something else.

**It’s not wise to buy the lady in your life:**

* Anything that plugs in because it probably means work.
* You should probably avoid clothing that involves selecting sizes… because there’s a 1 in 7000 chance that you will get it right…

you may hear; “Do I look like a **size 16** to you?” Or “I haven’t worn a **size 8** in 20 years!”

* **You probably shouldn’t buy them anything useful.** That bottle of Tarn-ex silver polish that promises to save hundreds of hours won’t win you brownie points.
* It’s not wise to buy her anything that involves **weight loss** or **self-improvement.** That could mean 6 months in the dog house…
* Don’t buy jewelry because what she wants, **you can’t afford;** and what you can afford, **she doesn’t want**.
* Don’t **buy** her **too much** or **spend too much** or you will likely hear, “How are we going to pay for this?”. **Then again**, if you **spend too little** she’ll think she’s not worth much to you.

You’re probably thinking…, “What **can** I get her?”

**That’s a good question, let me know when you figure it out!**

**How can such an SPECIAL day like Christmas be so complicated!**

It’s not God’s fault, I can assure you of that.

God set the example of gift giving for us, so Christmas would be better if we followed His lead…

In John’s first letter to the church (which is the followers of Jesus Christ)

**1 John 4:10** – “This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an (propitiation) atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

God knows His creation. Therefore He knew that mankind owed a debt for our sin that we could never repay.

So on that first Christmas, because of His AMAZING love for His creation, He gave the GREATEST Christmas gift that ever has or ever will be given.

Not the latest iphone or JoJo Toy…

He paid off the sin debt of all mankind… **“IN FULL”.**

Some may naively think, “well He’s God, He owns the heavens and the earth and everything in the earth… **He could afford to do that.**

**The gift of the payment wasn’t currency… It was the precious blood of His only Son…** But first He had to be born!

So that is the real celebration at Christmas… God wrapping Jesus (Savior) in a robe of flesh and placing Him in the womb of the faithful Virgin Mary who, with Joseph, her faithful and committed husband to be by her side, delivering God’s GREAT gift of love to the world in a small town, 6 miles from Jerusalem, called Bethlehem (which means “house of bread”).

It’s interesting that Jesus, who is also called the Bread of Life in the Scriptures, was born in the place that means “house of bread”.

God sent down His love at Christmas to be bread for those who had no bread and absolutely no hope of getting bread. (Physically or Spiritually)

It’s also interesting that the shepherds were the first ones to come to Bethlehem to see the Lord Jesus on that first Christmas...

Because Jesus would one day declare in John 10:11, “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

God sent down His love that Christmas to be the **only** Good Shepherd capable of guiding the lost sheep (all mankind) back to a relationship with the Father.

Why did God inspire the 40 different authors, over a period of 2500 years to record these historical events in the Bible that we are blessed to hold?

So that God could speak to us, **love us**, **bless us** and to **save us**.

It is very sad when people deny the validity of God’s Word, poke fun at it’s truth, or try to downplay it with conspiracy theories…

One can easily elevate themselves above God and His Word in their mind, but as we have found in our Genesis study, that never turns out well for people…

But as we discovered last Wednesday in Genesis 17, even though God had to restate His Covenant with Abraham for the **THIRD** time…

After Abraham and his wife had been doing what they thought was best…

Leaving God out of their decision making process and thereby making a real mess out of their life not to mention the lives of everyone around them...) setting an ungodly example…

Which walking with God does not produce…

God could have spoken to Abraham harshly, as a judge…, but He didn’t… He spoke to Him as a loving Father. **As He does with us…**

Some may **understand** God’s love intellectually, but what God did by sending His one and only Son to die on the Cross to take away our sin was meant for us to **EMBRACE** Him!

To embrace His **AMAZING LOVE** and **experience** His LOVE, blessing and Salvation **personally.**

So that all the days of our life, we could **trust in** His love, **rely on** His love and **cling to** His love (which is the definition of the word **believe (pisteuo)** that we find used in John 3:16).

As one chooses to embrace and experience God’s love, a number of things begin to become real to you… You begin to understand that…

1. **God’s love will never let you go.**

Again in John 3:16, God sounds pretty confident and determined that for “whosoever believes in Him (trusting in, relying on and clinging to Him, His love, His blessing, and His Salvation)”… **that He will not let us go!**

It’s pretty clear in the Scriptures that God’s love is an initiative taking love.

He helps those who genuinely have no hope (those who have hit the bottom of their barrel physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially, politically, financially…) and He fills them with LIFE GIVING Hope, Joy & Peace.

Jude, the half brother of Jesus (who’s father was Joseph) wrote in his single chapter letter that appears one page before the book of the Revelation…

**V20-21**

“But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”

When one **TRULY** experiences the initiative taking love of God, their love and appreciation does respond in kind.

Have you ever hugged someone who didn’t hug you back… Ewww…

It makes you want to ask what you’ve done to offend them…

It’s especially difficult when you know that you have sacrificed greatly to help that person… who you knew had no hope of helping themselves.

But even when we treat God this way, His love continues to try and reach us. His love will never let you go. **John 16:8**

We might be quick sometimes to give up on ourselves, other people, even God Himself, but God says “not so fast”…

**A couple of lines from Francis Thompson’s poem “Hound of Heaven”;**

“Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee, save Me, save only Me?”

All which I took from thee I did but take, not for thy harms,

but just that thou might’st seek it in my arms.”

All which thy child’s mistake fancies as lost,

I have stored for thee at home:

Rise, clasp My hand, and come.

Whats the answer for your life this Christmas? How do turn our loss, sorrows, depression and trouble? **Rise, clasp My hand and come…**

Come as Jude says (Jude 1:20-21) and “build yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”

The only way to have a loving relationship with **God**, your **Creator**, your **ABBA Father**, **friend**, **comforter**, **counselor** and **convincer** of sin…

Is to make it a “two way” relationship thru His Son Jesus Christ.

A relationship that is rooted in His **unconditional love** and **unconditional submission.**

**If you want God to be your friend, to be on your side and to bless you like He does His children…**

Then choose to be His fiend, live for Him and live as one of His obedient children, who doesn’t circumvent His Word.

I know a person who lives a tragic life, they have no friends, but it is because they have told me they don’t people anymore and they don’t want friends…

The problem comes in when they complain about being lonely…

* If you want God to feel the warmth of God’s embrace and you hope to He will lift you out of your pain & sadness, **do whatever it takes to love Him.**

“build yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”

**Pray in the Holy Spirit as Jesus taught His disciples: “Our Father…”**

Then you can truly receive with **anticipatory hope & gladness…**

the doxology/blessing that Jude gave in V24-25

**Let’s stand as we end our service.**

God gave you the greatest gift – Love, Blessing, Hope, Peace, Joy Forgiveness and Salvation, in His Son Jesus Christ.

My prayer is that you now give Him **your greatest gift**

* Your Love
* Setting yourself apart to build yourselves up in this most holy faith.
* Praying in the Spirit that God’s to build God’s kingdom
* Keeping yourself in His love.
* Trusting, relying and clinging to God to bless you with all that you need to serve Him well here as well as in heaven

Don’t take God for granted or think that you have more time to live for Jesus.

**Let us receive God’s Christmas blessing together**

“To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— 25 to the

only God, our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”