

# FAITH CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

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## WHAT DOES GOD WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

This month, most of us will be spending our time in the shopping malls looking for that special gift for our loved ones. Some of us will probably tire quickly fighting the traffic on our freeways, going from store to store to find something special that we pray will please those whom we love which they will cherish in the years of head. We do it not just because it is customary or traditional at Christmas time, but we do it because it provides us an opportunity to express our love for those we hold dear to our hearts.

***However, I believe we somehow seem to overlook what the Christmas festivities are really all about.*** It really is not just about showing our love for each other, as much as it should be a time when we celebrate our love for Christ, whom God sent to this earth, to give His life as a ransom for our souls. Christmas should be more than a holiday for family and friends to get together.

While family and friends getting together is a wonderful thing which, for Ginny and I, especially, we feel is very precious in light of the fact that our son, who has been a missionary-pastor in Tahiti for the past seven years, always takes the time to come home for a month to spend it with us during this season. We are very grateful that he is willing to do this. Yet, Christmas nevertheless surely has a higher meaning and purpose than friends and relatives gathering at this time of the year.

Of late, in taking another evaluation of my soul, in how I spend my time and activities both in the ministry as well as with my wife, family, work associates, friends, and church family I find that maybe God would have us to consider as to what God wants from myself or anyone which seeks to please Him in all our ways. So I have been asking myself, among all the things that I will be doing at this time of the year for family and friends, what is it that God is asking from me. What does God want for Christmas?

I think we may be a lot like the Children of Israel that assumed among all their religious duties in offering sacrifices on the Sabbath, or during some of the special annual or monthly festivals that He required of His people that as long as they kept up with the law and the custom of observing these religious days that God was pleased. However, when we read the Scriptures this is not necessarily true. When we read the Book of Psalms we can see this in a unique way.

*“Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. **For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.** I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.”* Psalms 50:7-12:

***What is it saying in the above verses?*** This language here which is spoken to His people is used to show the absurdity of the supposition that He was in any way dependent on man, or that the offering of sacrifice could be supposed in any way to lay Him under obligation to them. While it was a religious thing they were doing because Moses instructed them to do it yet it was not because God needed sacrifices for Himself....but rather they needed a sacrifice to atone for their sins. It wasn't a something God needed, but rather the offering of a sacrifice was for their redemption. Then in verse twenty-one he said: *“You thought that I was just like you.”* In other words, God doesn't need anything. He is all sufficient. But He does want something. He wants to bring mankind back into a relationship with Him. Christmas is a call to bring mankind back into relationship with the Father.

## WHAT DOES GOD WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

***So what is it that God wants for Christmas? He wants what every parent wants. He wants His children to come home.*** Like the father of the Prodigal son in Luke 1; He is waiting and looking for his sons and daughters to come back home. Sometimes the children come home, but the house becomes more of a place to sleep and maybe eat, but often times they would rather spend it with their friends rather than the family. They may have come home, but their time is spent elsewhere; home has become a place of convenience, rather than a place of relationship.

***Then there is something that God has taught us by His own example and that is in coming home it would be nice to bring a gift of some kind that is a true expression of our heart*** and love. I think some of the most precious items in our house, are the gifts our children have brought to us over the years. They were not necessarily expensive. Some were, because they were more than what they could afford. Others were a painting drawn by the hand of a child or a card with words of love and deep expression; a gift that they knew Mother or Daddy like (a favorite candy). All were expressions of the heart. I believe that is something God would like for Christmas: a true expression of one's heart.

*I will never forget a gift that our daughter brought me at Christmas time. It brings tears to my eyes even now when I think about it.* Sheri and Gary were newly married. Their income was not the greatest. But our daughter saw a piece of art, a preacher standing at his pulpit. An artist by the name of Clarke had made of his pastor. I don't know where in the world she got the money to pay for it to this date. But she purchased it and gave it to us. Ginny and I were going through a transition in ministry. We did not know what the future held. But when she gave that to us it did something for me that words could never tell. I wept like a baby upon receiving it. Later I learned that a friend of mine had obtained the same piece of art. He told me what it was worth....because he had it priced. It blew my mind what the financial value was.

***But for Ginny and I it was worth far more.*** You cannot put a true price on such a sacrifice that our daughter and husband made that year. Who can measure the wealth of true love? It is impossible. Who can measure the wealth of a mother's love for her child? Who can measure the sacrifice of a soldier who has given his life for our nation? Who can measure the sacrifice of a missionary on the field, away from home and family? Who can measure the devotion of a friend "...that sticketh closer than a brother." (Prov.18:24).

***If there is anything that God would ask for this Christmas Season, I believe He would like us to share with Him our time.*** When I use that word "time" I am not talking about five minutes or even an hour in church on Sunday Morning. I am talking about some real quality time. There is another passage in Psalms 50:23 that I believe carries this thought which fits not only the Christmas season, but the Thanksgiving season which we are experiencing while I write this article today.

*"The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!" Psalm 50:23*

Albert Barnes Commentary explains this verse better than I. It says that he who truly honors God is a true worshipper; he meets with God's approval. *"The word here rendered 'offereth' is the same which is used in Ps. 50:14, and means 'he that sacrifices:' here meaning, he that presents the sacrifice of praise. The Septuagint uses the words: 'the sacrifice of praise glorifies me.' The idea is, that the worship which God requires is 'praise;' it is not the mere external act of homage; it is not the presentation of a bloody sacrifice; it is not the mere bending of the knee; it is not a mere outward form: it is that which proceeds from the heart, and which shows that there is there a spirit of true thankfulness, adoration, and love."*

***So the question then that we must deal with is, What are we going to do at this Christmas time?*** Are we going to include our Lord in our celebration? Are we going to take the time to bring Him a gift, a gift that moves His heart towards us? Are we going to think about what He wants. My sister was buying a gift for a friend years ago. She told my mother, "I like what I am buying for my friend so much I would like it for myself." My mother responded, "Honey that is the way to measure how we give a gift for those we love." I think that is good counsel. What does God want? He probably wants what we want. Amen