



# Advent Conspiracy

Reclaiming Christmas

**When asked “What is the best gift you’ve ever given or received,” this is what members had to say:**

My time  
My heart and love for teaching  
Sharing a kidney with a friend  
Reading the comics a favorite ritual of my husband while he was in the hospital  
Taking a leave of absence from work to care for my mother  
Growing, freezing and giving away jam.  
Listening to my ill brother as he told stories of growing up together.  
Giving my children a real sense of being global citizens & respecting all people  
Instilling independence and confidence in my daughter  
Unconditional love for my brother who is much different than I  
Listening without trying to “fix” the problem  
Caring for a friend with breast cancer  
Anonymously paying for someone to travel to visit family  
Spending time at a veteran’s home to listen to stories  
A photo album of the previous year’s family life  
Making Grandma’s and Grandpa’s “Book of Love”  
A high score on a school entrance exam so my parent’s didn’t have to worry about the money  
Sharing my grandmother’s ring with my fiancé  
A photo collage of my father and his grandfather together  
Caring alongside my brother for our dying parents  
A hug  
Losing a job that led to a better way of living  
A mix of songs made by a friend  
A logbook of our Canadian Adventures over the years  
A special t-shirt produced by my mom before she died  
A decorated Christmas tree from my son  
Handmade gifts from my children  
Baking and sharing bread with others.



## Rethink Church Reclaim Christmas

**GIVE MORE ♦ GIVE YOURSELF**

### ▶ Give the **RIGHT** gift for the **RIGHT** reason

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world [so] that we might live through him.” 1 John 4:9

“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

### ▶ Give in order to show them you **CARE**

“God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life.” John 3:16

The Gift is an expression of the Giver’s heart

The Gift inspires the future, doesn’t dwell on the past

The Gift is an invitation to a deeper relationship

### ▶ Give where it’s **NEEDED** most

*How did you know? It’s just what I wanted?*

“There is no happiness in having or in getting, but only in giving” Drummond

### ▶ Giving Questions

*Am I giving this out of a sense of obligation, guilt, or expectation?*

*Will I go into debt? Will it cause stress and bitterness later?*

*Do I expect something in return?*

*Does my Giving reflect my desire to be like Christ?*

## John 1:35-42 (NIV)

<sup>35</sup>The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.

<sup>36</sup>When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

<sup>37</sup>When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

<sup>39</sup>"Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

<sup>40</sup>Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. <sup>41</sup>The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). <sup>42</sup>And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

"Christmas Gift Suggestions:

To your enemy, forgiveness.

To an opponent, tolerance.

To a friend, your heart.

To a customer, service.

To all, charity.

To every child, a good example.

To yourself, respect."

Oren Arnold

There once was a little girl that went to the mall with her mother. It was Christmas time. She sat on Santa Claus' lap. And she said, "Hi." And he said, "What would you like for Christmas?" She gave him a whole list of expensive toys which she wanted for Christmas and then without a word of appreciation, she jumped off Santa's lap and ran back to her mother. And her concerned mother spoke quickly, "Honey, haven't you forgotten something?" The little girl thought for a moment, then said, "O, yes." Then turning back toward Santa, she shouted, "Charge it."

- We give gifts to:
  - Mark and celebrate special occasions
  - Strengthen ties in a relationship
  - Honor or acknowledge the importance of the recipient
  - Exhibit sacrificial love
- It fits you
  - Not a "one-size-fits-all" [not re-gifting]
  - Gifts that match your temperament
  - A gift that fits means that the person who gave you the gift knows you, took the time to think about you
  - "It's the thought that counts."
- It meets a need
  - Not every gift needs to meet a need (some gifts are nice *because* they are luxurious)
  - But a gift is especially memorable if it's "just what I needed". Opens a door of discovery
- It involves some sacrifice on the giver's part:
  - Says the recipient is worth sacrificing for
  - The watch and the hairpin
  - "...and all I got was this lousy T-shirt"