

## Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> – CHRISTMISSED

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Christmas time! *Time of the year we sit in front of dead tree, eating candy out of our socks.*

For most people, Christmas is either their favorite time of the year, or it's most difficult time of the year (overwhelmed, hopelessness, depression, inadequacy, realizing how little we have)

See this in the music at Christmas time:

It's The Most Wonderful Time of the Year vs. Blue Christmas

Feliz Navidad vs. Christmas Shoes

Joy To The World vs. Grandma Got Ran Over By a Reindeer (don't sing Joy because Grandma...)

Did God intend for Christmas, the celebration of His son Jesus' birth, to bring these feelings of being overwhelmed and despair? What if we rediscover the true spirit of Christmas?

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One of verses that best describes Christmas is John 3:16. We normally don't think about this verse in view of Christmas but it is the essence, "***God so loved the world, He GAVE...***"

**1. OUR GOD IS A GIVER, NOT A TAKER.** This is a revelation to many people. You hear them say in a tragedy, "why did God have to take...?" If we lost or didn't get something.

How many have lost something of value this year? (job, loved one, house, finances, health)

All religions of the world have portrayed the gods as takers, creating humans to be their slaves or entertainment. Heave handed, controlling, demanding, disconnected, distant.

Who takes from us? spiritual enemy, a fallen world, humans sinning. Not picture of our God.

***God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: he sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he love us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*** 1 John 4:8-10

God is love. Seen in Jesus. God is a giver. Giving is an expression of God's love. (all God's given me is UP... not the movie, "given up on me")

James tells us, "***every good and perfect gifts comes down from the Father.***" (James 1:17)

Everything that is good and perfect in this world is gift from God. Air you breath, heart beating, ability to think, beautiful sunrise, flower, music, art, good meal, friends, family.

Sometimes, **just making it through** the hard times is a gift from God. Strength, Perseverance.

The prophet Jeremiah declares, ***Because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.*** <sup>23</sup> ***They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*** Lam. 3:23

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**2. GOD CREATED US TO BE GIVERS, NOT TAKERS.**

Christmas becomes overwhelming when the focus is on receiving.

Difficult for some to understand. People contact us that are concerned that their "Children will not have Christmas." Is this what Christmas is? Teenagers, will get angry because won't get as many presents. Any game will do as children have multiple game systems. Maybe best Christmas ever... discover true spirit of Christmas.

Be creative this year... examples... teach children there are people in greater need than them.

God wired us to pass on what He has given to us. When we do this we are most fulfilled.

***Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*** 1 John 4:11-12

Our response to God's love for us is to love others. Just like God's love is expressed through giving so is ours. We are changed in the process.

Most powerful encounters with God in my life have happened in the context of giving to others (mission field, mentoring a youth, intentional conversation with neighbor)

**Illustration:** Taker = closed fist (story of Keira); Giver = open hand

I have watched people grasping onto things and holding so tightly they cannot let go. It might be a precious heirloom, it may be the security of investments, a hobby, their time, their way of life, a dream. We find ourselves holding on so tightly sometimes we miss out what God wants to do in and through our life.

**VIDEO:** CHRISTMAS MIRACLE Become someone's miracle this Christmas.

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