

Tired of Looking for the Perfect Gift?

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The Dreaded Gift List

If you ask my husband Jeff, he knows the reason why he dreads Christmas each year.

It's the presents.

Watching the gift craziness can ruin Christmas for him.

Trying to find the perfect gift for everyone can take the joy out of Christmas.

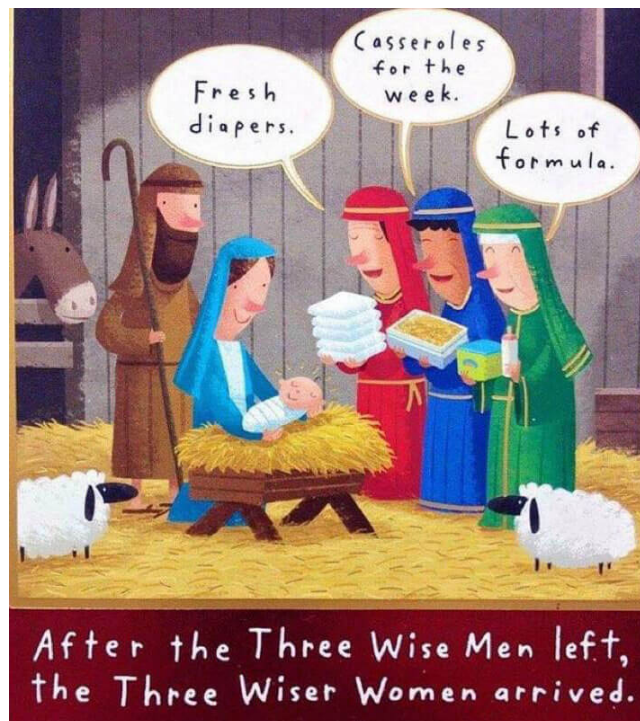


- We labor over our gift choices.
- We spend money we don't have.
- We exchange gifts that often are neither needed nor wanted.

I wonder which ideas got scratched off the Wise Men's gift list before they settled on the big three of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

And I wonder what Mary thought when she saw those three gifts.

(I'm guessing she appreciated them in ways we couldn't understand.)



3 Ideas for Your Gift List

What can we do to relieve our stress over gift lists?

Here are three ideas.

1. Close Your Computer

I did most of my Christmas shopping this year online. I love the convenience of it.

But the internet never locks its door. It doesn't close at midnight and reopen in the morning. It stays open 24/7 and tempts us to linger, look around, and shop longer than we should.

We can't depend on sore feet to put a time limit on our shopping anymore, so we need to set our own time (and money) limits on how long we'll shop online.

And also limit how long we'll look at other people's perfect-picture Christmas gifts wrapped perfectly under their trees. Let's not allow social media to swap our Christmas joy for Christmas envy.

2. Put Aside Perfect

Let go of the idea that THIS gift will be THE gift to remember for all time. No object we can buy, make, or wrap will satisfy someone's deepest longings. Maybe we can scratch an itch by gifting the latest piece of technology or a shiny new trinket.

But nothing we can give will last forever.

Yes, we can still wrap a present and give our tokens of love, but let's keep them in perspective. They only represent our love; they aren't Love itself.

The only perfect gift is the one we've already been given: Jesus.

If we truly want to keep Christ in Christmas, then we should *be* Christ this Christmas.

3. Prioritize People

But how? How can we not just DO Christmas again this year? How can we BE Christmas?

Like Jesus showed us.

- Jesus came to live among us.
- To serve us.
- To love us.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 1:14

Especially at Christmas (but all year-round!), these gifts that Jesus gave—living, serving, loving—are also the best gifts we can give.

Prioritize the *people* in your life. Be totally present to them when you're sitting around the table. Listen to their stories about work parties. Smile at how much their children have grown.

It may be cliché, **but your presence is truly the best present you can give.**

And the Grinch, with his grinch-feet ice-cold in the snow,

Stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so?

"It came without ribbons! It came without tags!

It came without packages, boxes or bags!"

And he puzzled three hours, till his puzzler was sore.

Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!

"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store.

Maybe Christmas. . . perhaps. . . means a little bit more!"

The Only Perfect Gift

Maybe your niece's eyes won't light up as brightly if you give her a knock-off Scruff-A-Luv instead of the real thing.

But if you remain present to her—looking eye-to-eye, playing together, laughing together—that's the gift that will outlast all others.

That's the gift that Jesus gives us.

- Full attention.
- Complete sacrifice.
- Total grace.

Jeff and I have actually finished our Christmas shopping for this year. It's a record for us to finish this early. And to have stressed this less.

The gifts aren't perfect. But we are at peace. Now we're freer to visit, to volunteer, to pass along the gift that Jesus was born to give us.

Himself. ***The only perfect gift.***

Have you finished your Christmas shopping? What stresses you the most during Christmas? What relieves your stress?

Please share your thoughts in the comments. We love hearing from you.

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- **4 Things Everyone Wants to Hear You Say**
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