



Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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Free to Be
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and
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Relationship and Life
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The Spirit of Giving

It is December, and for weeks the sights and sounds of the Christmas season have been around us. Christmas decorations are abundant, Christmas carols fill the airwaves, and Christmas shopping is in full swing. Many retailers depend on this season to establish a solid profit for their business. Holiday shoppers oblige by purchasing at a hectic pace, often overspending to fulfill the demands of a lengthy gift list. Christmas quickly becomes a "retail holiday", fueled by advertisements and pressured by social obligations and expectations.

What is all this gift giving about? Why do we do it? To find the roots of Christmas gifting, we have to go back to the original Christmas - the birth of the Christ child. St. Matthew records the acts of the Magi, the "Wise Men from the East", who sought out the newborn "king" so they could honor and worship him. They persistently pursued their goal, eventually giving gifts (gold, incense, and myrrh) as a physical display of their worship. No one told them they had to give. Joseph and Mary weren't even expecting their visit. They simply acted as led by their heart.

What a clear, purposeful approach to gift giving! The Magi used gifts to express what was in their hearts. The gifts were valuable and impressive on their own. Yet, their greatest value was in the message of honor and worship they delivered. The message of the gifts took precedence over the actual value of the gifts.

This reveals the true spirit of gift giving, a free spirit focused on conveying a personal message from our heart to the heart of those we value. It is a spirit that recognizes, nurtures, and strengthens the relationships we hold dear through the expression of caring, honor, value, and love.

When this spirit is present, the questions "What do I *want to get* for Christmas?" or "What do I *have to buy* for Christmas?" become "What do I *want to give* for Christmas?"

Given the material chaos of the holiday season, what can we do to revive this spirit of meaningful giving? Allow me to offer a few suggestions. First, *you* be in charge of *your* gift giving. Gift by choice and desire, not to fulfill some assumed obligation or expectation. Allow gift giving to have meaning and to be an expression of your heart, not a test of your ability to impress.

Second, actually focus on *giving*, rather than on receiving. Give without the expectation of receiving in equal share. But also, allow others to give to you. In doing so, you bless them with the opportunity to experience the joy of sharing their heart with you.

Third, pay attention to the gift, the recipient, and the fit between the two. Gifts that hold special meaning to those who receive them clearly reflect your heart message of attentive, personal caring.

Finally, be thankful. Be thankful not only for the gifts you receive, but also for the givers of those gifts. Be thankful for the relationships you share, and for the love and honor expressed through the gifts.

When we give (and receive) in this way, we open ourselves to a level of joy, satisfaction, and peace available only through connectedness with others. We step beyond the physical and allow the real desires of our heart and soul to be fed. So while the material gifts we receive might be wonderful, the heart gifts are truly *priceless*.

After all, that is what the Gift of Christmas is all about in the first place! Merry Christmas!



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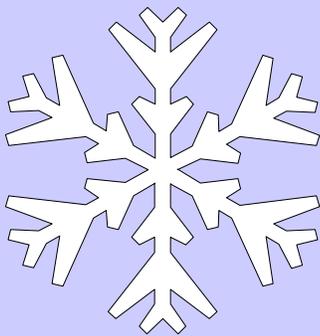
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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can help you take on the challenges of life and bring new vitality into your life relationships.

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Gifts Beyond Things

In the midst of all the wonderful presents that are available for giving, what if the most special gift you could give was actually *your self*? That's right ... your self!

Now, I'm not suggesting that you get a big bow and plant it on your chest (though in the right situation that has interesting possibilities). Rather, consider for a moment how you are of value to other people. (If this is difficult to imagine, it probably is time to tweek your self image a bit.) Think of what you have to offer others, just as you are.

Who would welcome a visit from you? Who would love to share a cup of coffee, a hug, and the time to talk as much as they want? Who would enjoy receiving a surprise phone call from you? Who do you know who could use a little help cleaning their house, painting a room, or putting up a fence? And who would benefit from a smile, or from a word of support or encouragement?

The greatness of gifting is in the giving of your self - your heart, your time, your energy, your attention. It just doesn't get any better than that!



"Give, if thou can, an alms; if not, a sweet and gentle word."

-Robert Herrick