



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

CHRISTMAS: TEACHING US TO GIVE

KEY PASSAGE: Luke 2:1-20 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Matthew 28:19-20 | Mark 10:47-49 | Luke 6:38
John 4:4 | Acts 4:32 | 2 Corinthians 9:6 | Galatians 4:4

► SUMMARY

The Christmas season offers a wonderful opportunity to show love and appreciation for others by giving gifts.

However, because of the materialism that often accompanies our celebrations, some Christians wonder whether this practice has any scriptural basis. Although commercialism has corrupted this tradition to some degree, that alone is not a good reason to abandon the practice of giving gifts. There is no better time of the year to freely demonstrate generosity to others. Christ's birth, life, and ministry were exemplified by giving. We should also be joyful givers.

► SERMON POINTS

Jesus' birth was characterized by giving.

Everyone who was involved in the Christmas story gave something:

- **Mary gave her body and reputation.** She willingly surrendered her body to bear the Son of God. Furthermore, because she was not married, she gave her reputation. Although her engagement to Joseph was as binding as marriage, to be found pregnant before the actual ceremony would have been proof of adultery and just cause for stoning.
- **Caesar Augustus gave a decree.** The Roman emperor called for a census to accomplish his plan of taxing all the people. Although Caesar thought it was his idea, God was simply using him to accomplish His divine purpose. Prophecy dictated that the Messiah would be

born in Bethlehem, but Mary and Joseph were living in Nazareth.

- **The innkeeper gave a stable.** When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, the city was so crowded that there was no place for her to give birth. Although the inn was full, the innkeeper gave what he had—a stable for Jesus' birthplace. In every aspect of His life, He helps us identify with Him—from His humble beginning to His ordinary home life and occupation as a carpenter.
- **The angel of the Lord gave an announcement.** The first report of Christ's birth was delivered by a glorious angel to a group of simple shepherds. Upon hearing the announcement and the location of the birth, they quickly hurried off to find the Child in a manger with Mary and Joseph at His side.
- **The shepherds gave a testimony.** After seeing the Messiah, they couldn't keep the news to themselves, but told everyone what they had heard and seen. However, those who heard simply wondered at the news, but they never attempted to see Jesus.
- **The wise men gave gifts and worship.** They were probably astrologers or philosophers who came from Persia. When this star caught their attention, they went on a long journey to find the newborn King of the Jews. When they found Jesus, they worshipped Him and offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- **God gave His only begotten Son.** The greatest gift of all came from God the Father who gave His Son to the world to die as a sacrifice for our sins. What an awesome gift God gave us in His Son, Jesus!

Christ's life was characterized by giving.

When Jesus began His ministry, every event in His life was a demonstration of giving.

- **He gave of Himself in teaching the truth.** Jesus started sharing the truth at the young age of 12. He sat in the temple with the Pharisees and Sadducees, asking and answering questions.
- **He gave time to study the Word of God.** From the time He was a boy until He was 30 years old, He studied the Scriptures, listened in synagogue, and learned from His parents so He'd be fully equipped to begin His ministry of teaching God's Word.
- **He gave of Himself in healing the sick.** Everywhere He went, Jesus healed countless people and cast out demons. He was never too busy to stop and meet their needs. When Bartimaeus heard Jesus was passing by, he loudly called to Him (Mark 10:47-49). Although he was just a poor, blind beggar who had no value in others' eyes, Jesus stopped and healed him. No matter how unimportant we feel, Christ always has time to listen, answer our prayers, and provide for our needs.
- **He gave of Himself in training the 12 disciples.** Although Jesus taught and ministered to the crowds, His primary ministry was to His 12 disciples. Knowing that they were going to be entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the whole world, Jesus trained them for three years (Matt. 28:19-20). After the Holy Spirit filled them, they faithfully carried out the mission. Today we have the same assignment and the same empowerment of the Holy Spirit—to give the message of salvation to a lost world.
- **He gave Himself away in friendship.** Jesus was always pouring Himself into the lives of others. When He came to the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus for rest, He continued to give of Himself as Mary sat at His feet listening to His words.

Our lives should be characterized by giving to others.

A true follower of Jesus is a giver—not just at Christmastime, but throughout the entire year. Generosity is part of our identity in Christ and should be

our natural response to God's blessings and provisions. Giving continues to remind us that He is the source of all we have. The New Testament church set an example of giving by sharing their goods and possessions with one another (Acts 4:32). Some things we can learn about generosity are that:

- **If we give generously, we'll reap generously.** In 2 Corinthians 9:6, Paul reminds us that our generosity, or lack of it, affects our future in some way.
- **We should give the gospel to others as much as possible.** Of all the gifts we have ever received, the gift of eternal life is by far the most valuable. That's why we must be willing to tell others what Jesus has done in our lives. The Christmas season is an opportune time to share the most precious gift of all. We'll never know how our words will influence someone else unless we speak up.

► RESPONSE

- What is your attitude toward giving gifts at Christmas? Have you let the world's materialism and commercialism steal your joy and generosity?
- What can you do this Christmas to extend giving beyond your own home? What could you offer to someone in need? What gifts can you give that are cost-free?
- Is anything keeping you from giving someone the gospel message at Christmas? What can you do to overcome these obstacles?

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