



DAY 12

Thursday, December 13

(Candle of Love)

2 SAMUEL 24:24

*“I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.”*

# The Cost of Christmas

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Christmas is all about the presents, right? At least, that’s what it seems we’re being told. I mean, at what other time of the year do we receive so many of them? It is the season where family, friends and loved ones show us how much they care by sending us packages of all shapes and sizes wrapped with brightly colored paper. However, Christmas is not solely a time for cashing in. We’ve also been told that that it’s better to give than receive, and for this reason—though perhaps also due to a felt sense of obligation—we will likely be giving close to as many gifts as we get. While it can all become rather expensive, this practice of reciprocal giving should remind us that every gift we receive was bought at a price. And though it’s impolite to ask someone how much they paid for our gift, having an accurate idea about what was spent can serve to help us better appreciate its value.

Have we ever stopped to think about it? Have we ever really taken the time to ask ourselves how much it all costs? We’ll say we want the idealized holiday experience, but exactly how much are we willing to sacrifice for that “perfect” Christmas? Would we sacrifice what we love most in order to give a gift of immeasurable worth? Would we chance such a gift on someone who would never fully appreciate it; one who’d be ungrateful; or, even worse, one who’d completely reject it? Further, what if you knew that the person would attempt to destroy it?

Why would we ask such questions? It is to remind ourselves of the reason we should celebrate. If we cannot see the cross of Calvary within the cradle of Christmas, then we fail to understand what this season is about. If we find the cloth-swaddled child in a manger yet never envision the Messiah and the

crucifixion, then we will never know what this gift is worth. If we do not take enough time to open the gift and see all that is in it—the Father who was willing to give up his Son; the Son who was willing to give himself up in obedience to the Father; the sacrifice made by a loving God for the sake of an unloving world—then we will never come close to knowing how much this holiday actually cost. If, during this season of Advent, we get caught up in the seasonal trappings and frenzied consumerism that surround us, we will very likely miss the fact that the true value of Christmas has nothing to do with how much we spend. It is not about our gifts of exorbitant expense; it is about the divine gift of unfathomable worth.

Yes, nowadays it seems that we cannot have Christmas and not have the presents. The truth is, however, that there would never have been Christmas were it not for the presence—the incarnate presence of God. It is the only gift we will ever receive which, should we accept it in faith, will take an eternity to fully unwrap.

## RESPOND:

**DO:** Purchase a Christmas gift that stretches your wallet for someone who means a lot to you. Then post the receipt somewhere where you’ll see it often, so that the cost will remind you of your love for him or her.

**PRAY:** That we would allow God to stretch us through lavish giving of our selves, our time, and our money, so that others may get a sense of the generous God that we serve. proclaim “the wisdom from God” that is Jesus.