

December 10, 2023

## Christmas Gift Giving Guide – part 1 - Gifts of Inconvenience

Has Christmas gift giving ever been more convenient or efficient than it is today? When you don't know what to give, you can do a specific search at Amazon. You can enter in your search box, "best selling gifts for 4 year old boys", and you get a bunch of selected things to consider.... Easy peasy, right?

Same search for a 30 year old man, (a hat that says "*It me took 30 years to look this good.*")

Well....maybe he will like it?

Certainly, convenience has its value, **but don't forget the value of inconvenience!!**

Let me put it this way: Which do you prefer?

- Store bought bread from a plastic bag... or,
- Fresh baked bread, still warm from the oven, warm enough to melt butter.
- Store bought bread is convenient, and fresh baked bread is not convenient, but there is great value there.

"One way to show someone you love them is to simply go out of your way for them. It is the gift of inconvenience."

–Mark Batterson, Twitter post 2-16-2014

Today we are going to talk about gifts of inconvenience.

### WAYS TO GO OUT OF YOUR WAY

#### 1. Pay the **PRICE** of **SACRIFICE**

*2 Samuel 24:24 (NIV) But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.*

**David captures the essence of the gift of inconvenience when he said:** "*No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.*"

**DAVID was willing to pay the PRICE of SACRIFICE.**

- **Genuine worship** for God involves personal investment, and...
- **Genuine love** for someone often involves gifts of inconvenience.

In the classic 1905 Christmas story *The Gift of the Magi*, Jim and Della were very much in love and they wanted to buy each other meaningful Christmas gifts, but they had no money. So they each sacrificed something they cherished to buy each other gifts.

**Spoiler alert:** The irony is that their sacrifices make each of the gifts they receive useless.

**The book concludes with this paragraph:**

*"The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, . . . And . . . I have . . . chronicled [for you] . . . [how] two foolish children . . . unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But . . . let it be said that . . . Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they . . . are wisest. . . They are the magi."*

and why is that? The PRICE of SACRIFICE is a powerful expression of love and devotion..

**WAYS TO GO OUT OF YOUR WAY**

**2. The inconvenient gift of SERVING**

Turning our attention to the original Christmas story, we find the gift of inconvenience in the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Mary's whole life took an unexpected turn when the angel Gabriel visited her with the message

*Luke 1:31–32 (NIV) You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High..*

*Luke 1:34–35 (NIV) "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"*

<sup>35</sup> *The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."*

So when Gabriel explained what God was calling her to do, she signed up to give herself to **the most profound inconvenience**, with these words.

*Luke 1:38 (NIV) "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.*

Mary willingly embraced incredible inconvenience. She experienced painful misunderstandings, and accusations.

Mary's inconvenient gift of SERVICE was a profoundly powerful expression of love!

**WAYS TO GO OUT OF YOUR WAY**

**3. The inconvenient gift of RESPONSIBILITY**

Joseph, too, played a pivotal role in the Christmas narrative once he learned from God in a dream that Mary was telling the truth ....

Even though the child was not his, and there would be a marked drop in his social standing in his Jewish community, he stood by Mary, and gave her, and baby Jesus the very **INCONVENIENT** gift of **RESPONSIBILITY**. He would care for her, stand by her, care for Jesus, stand by Jesus.

You can read more about it in Matthew 1.

I'd just like to interject at this point.

**Foster Parents:** Bravo to you! You are much like Joseph! Give the gift of inconvenient responsibility!

**Actually, to All RESPONSIBLE Parents:** Bravo to you! Children are not convenient! And your inconvenient responsibilities are a gift!

## WAYS TO GO OUT OF YOUR WAY

### 4. *The inconvenient gift of FORGIVENESS*

Think of the price God was willing to pay to give his Christmas Gift to us?

*John 3:16 (NIV) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Think of the price Jesus was willing to pay?

*Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." ...*

Paul later writes this.

*Colossians 3:13 ...Forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

How do you forgive the unforgivable?

*2 Corinthians 5:15 (NIV) And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

### "Unbroken"

In her book, *Unbroken*, Laura Hildenbrand (author of *Seabiscuit*) recounts the amazing true story of World War II veteran and prisoner-of-war survivor Louis (or Louie) Zamperini. On May 27, 1943, Zamperini's bomber left Oahu in search of survivors from a downed plane. About 800 miles from the base one of the engines cut out and the bomber plunged into the ocean. Zamperini and another soldier would stay afloat on a tiny life raft for 47 days—a world record for survival at sea. After confronting sharks, starvation, and dementia, their real battle would begin. Zamperini spent the next two years as a Japanese POW in the notorious Sugamo Prison. In particular, a guard named Watanabe (nicknamed "the Bird") ensured that Louis endured constant physical torture and verbal humiliation—all in an attempt to shatter the spirit of the American soldiers.

In 1944, after Louis had been declared dead, he returned to America to a rush of publicity. Unfortunately, his life quickly descended into a new self-made prison of alcoholism and bitterness. In particular, Louis now endured constant nightmares about his past and an obsessive drive to murder "the Bird." But the walls of addiction and hatred started to crumble in 1949 when Louis attended a Billy Graham crusade and heard the gospel and trusted Christ.

After receiving Christ, in the words of Laura Hildenbrand:

When [Louie] thought of his history, what resonated with him now was not all that he had suffered but the divine love that he believed had intervened to save him. He was not the worthless, broken, forsaken man that the Bird had striven to make him. In a single, silent moment, his rage, his fear, his humiliation and helplessness, had fallen away. That morning, he believed he was a new creation.

A year after trusting Christ, Zamperini returned to the Sugamo Prison in Japan where he met with his former captors, except the Bird. When Louis was told that the Bird had committed suicide, in Hildebrand's words,

[Louie] felt something he had never felt for his captor before. With a shiver of amazement, **he realized it was compassion.** At that moment, something shifted sweetly inside him. **It was forgiveness, beautiful and effortless and complete.** For Louie Zamperini, the war was over.

Source: Unbroken, (Random House, 2010), pp. 376-379

**The price of sacrifice, serving, responsibility, and forgiveness are all inconvenient gifts...**

**But, according to Jesus, it's how we give gifts to Jesus! He told us so. This is part of his wish list! It is his gift giving guide!**

*Matthew 25:40 (NIV) "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*

Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birthday. Don't you think it is a little ironic to have a big birthday celebration and give gifts to each other on Jesus' birthday?

I want you to consider a specific gift to Jesus as the series finale!

- Give an inconvenient gift on Christmas Eve.
- We have decided to give away our Christmas Eve Sunday offering to the Verde Valley Homeless Coalition.

(Tuesday 19th through the 25th) ... in the giving boxes or online.

# Talk It Over

## Christmas Gift Giving Guide Part 1 - Gifts of Inconvenience

### SMALL TALK

1. What's the most memorable or unconventional gift you've ever received or given during the holiday season?

### VIEWPOINT

2. **Read 2 Samuel 24:24** (David's Gift of Inconvenience). What does David's statement reveal about his understanding of worship or love?
3. **Read Luke 1:38** (Mary's Gift of Inconvenience) What does Mary's willingness teach us?
4. **Read Matthew 1:18-25** (Joseph's Gift of Inconvenience) What did Joseph's inconvenient gift of responsibility look like?
5. **Read Luke 23:33-24; Colossians 3:13** (Jesus' Gift of Inconvenience) How is it possible for us to forgive the unforgivable?

### GETTING PERSONAL

6. How can you give a gift of inconvenience this Christmas season?

### MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

**Action Step Challenge.** What will you give that is an inconvenient gift?