



## THE ENTITLEMENT MENTALITY

Somehow, somewhere, some time in the insanity of Christmas shopping, it will come to you. It always does. Yes, you will abandon the idea that it is possible to find the perfect gift for every person on your Christmas list. And then you will do what you have always done every year – settle for “just-something-to-let-them-know-you-thought-of-them” presents. This is the reason why many people get impractical and unusable stuff every Christmas. The other day, I learned about a new practice – “re-gifting.” When you don’t like what you get for Christmas, you simply wrap it up again and give it to another person (preferably someone who is far removed from the original giver).

I propose to you that we don’t really give gifts on Christmas. Why not? What is the real definition of a gift? A true gift is something that is freely given. Nowadays, it is almost impossible for us to give true gifts at Christmas time. We often give Christmas presents with strings attached.

Most people give in order to receive or because they have received. They’re going to give to you because they know you’re going to give back to them. Some people give out of guilt. They give to make up for some wrong they did in the past. Others give in order to control other people. Parents do this all the time – they give to their kids in order to try to control them. Some give for prestige, for glory, for honor. They want to brag and say, “Look! I’m a great giver!”

There is also a growing phenomenon in modern society that makes it impossible to give and receive gifts. I call it the “Entitlement Mentality.” It’s a personal philosophy that causes people to say, “I should get whatever I deserve. I’m entitled to it.” It’s not entirely dissimilar to the thinking behind the old “merit system,” where you have to earn everything you get. After all, “there ain’t no free lunch.”

The entitlement mentality has wrecked our concept about gifts. Giving and receiving a true gift has become rare, even almost extinct – a casualty of the entitlement culture. Because of this, we now have a tendency to overvalue what we do in order to earn things. We also have a tendency to undervalue what we receive. We often believe that we deserve more.

The entitlement mentality has created difficulties in gift-giving. Giving something that seems undeserved creates superiority in the giver. People want credit for giving something undeserved, for giving without receiving in return. They want the recipients to be indebted to them in some tangible way.

The entitlement mentality has also ruined gift-receiving for many people. Receiving something that seems undeserved creates instability in the receivers. They want to pay it back. Others don’t want to use a gift that they don’t feel they deserve. So they try to find something wrong with it.

In spite of the millions of dollars that people spend during the Christmas season, it’s still the loneliest time of the year for many people. The giving and receiving of much stuff do not really mean that people have experienced the giving and receiving of gifts. Why? Because the Original Lover and Giver of gifts has been left out of the people’s lives. They celebrate the season, but not the Reason for the season.

The entitlement mentality is rooted in the human sinful nature. We were not created with this mentality. We were created in God’s “own image.” (**Gen. 1:27-28**) God created humankind with the capacity to love unconditionally, just like God does. We were made to enjoy intimacy with God’s Spirit. We were made to live in God’s love – freely receiving and giving His gift of love and thereby, freely loving each other. We were meant to live a life of love – giving and receiving – without boundaries.

But then, one day, Adam and Eve were deceived into thinking that they were entitled to receive much more. They began to think that God was holding out on them. If they ate the forbidden fruit, would they get what they were entitled to? Would they become more wise or godlike? That’s how the sin virus began. And now, its more sophisticated strain – the entitlement mentality – prevents people from receiving and celebrating God’s gift of love.

We celebrate God’s gift of love because we believe it’s true and we realize that He paid a great price for this gift. Justification by grace through faith is the true love of God (**Rom. 3:25**). God is not moody or capricious; He knows no seasons of change. He has a single relentless stance toward us: He loves us no matter what. He is the only God man has ever heard of who loves sinners.

But of course this is almost too incredible for us to accept. Nevertheless, the Bible says that through no merit of ours, but by God’s grace, we have been restored to the royal family of God through the life, death, and resurrection of His beloved Son. “*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!*” (**1 John 3:1** NIV) This is what the Christmas season should be about. This is the Good News – God’s gift of love.

Once again, we have the opportunity to celebrate Christ this season by freely receiving His gift of love and freely sharing it with others.