

Jim Martin
P.O. Box 291962
Dayton OH 45429
www.jmmgrace.com PastorJimGCC@gmail.com

December 2017 - "GOD FREELY GIVES"

Dear Friends,

Christmas is a unique and wonderful time of the year. I realize it is different for people around the world, but there is still much celebration and happiness. One of the things I enjoy so much during this season is the music; from "White Christmas," to "O Holy Night," to "Sleigh Ride," to "Joy to the World," and many others, the songs are a welcome reprieve from the continual downward turn of our society. In a way, Christmas is a kind of escape from the many problems in the world.

What I do find disappointing during this special time of year is how some preachers use the Christmas season as an opportunity to "encourage" people to give more money. It is not uncommon to hear a pastor say something like this at offering time to his congregation: "God gave His best to the world, the least we can do is give our best to Him," or "God gave us His Son to be a sacrifice for you; therefore, you should be willing to sacrifice for Him," all in an attempt to motivate people to give more. It is very sad that such ministers twist the celebration of the birth of Jesus into an opportunity to manipulate people toward giving money, though I doubt they see it that way.

Does God expect - even demand - that we give more money during Christmas? Does such giving motivate Him to bestow more blessings on our lives? Will He withhold things from us during the upcoming year if we do not give more at Christmas? Does God release a special, once-a-year, Christmas-time only anointing of increase on offerings? No, no, no and again, no. On the other hand, since Christmas is referred to as "the season for giving," what has God given us? Let's consider what He has revealed in the Bible.

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)

God gave us the means for salvation. If ever there were a condition in which God would demand a financial gift, it would be this one; but all it costs us is our belief. Money is never the catalyst for God to save a person. The moment we decide to believe in Jesus for salvation, God's life is birthed in us and we become His children.

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

The word "healed" in the above verse comes from the Greek word "iaomai." Twenty-seven times it is used in the New Testament as a specific reference to physical healing. God has given us healing through the stripes on Jesus. Thus, there is no amount of money that anyone can give to secure healing for physical ailments.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

We have been given a supernatural peace which is more powerful than any challenging, stressful situation we could ever face. Peace in this world is essentially the absence of problems; peace from God is an anointed stabilizing of emotions on a continual basis, regardless of the existence of problems. This peace is ours NOW, but it is up to us whether or not we allow it to guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8)

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

God has given us access to both financial and material blessings through His grace and the completed work of Jesus. No matter how much we give, offerings can never supplant what Jesus has done or God's grace when it comes to our increase. Furthermore, grace is not seasonal; it is always available in its fullness every day of the year.

These are just a few examples of the numerous gifts we have received from God and offerings are not required to access them.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

There are so many other examples of God's gifts to us, but His greatest gift is the most meaningful.

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. (Jeremiah 31:3)

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)

God's greatest gift to us is His love. It is the catalyst for everything He has given us. His love is perfect toward us and is not based on how we act, what we give or how much we love Him. His love does not accommodate sin, but it does forgive and restore. Were it not for His love, it is unimaginable what kind of conditions would exist in order for us to receive anything from Him. Herein lies part of the problem with all of the "special Christmas anointings" promised on offerings: If preachers truly understood the love of God and what was accomplished through the completed work of Jesus, they would not believe that giving money motivates our Heavenly Father to release blessings into our lives.

Does this mean that Christians should not give or give extra during the Christmas season? It means neither. If Christians want to give extra during Christmas, doing so is their choice. The same is true for any offerings given year-round. When we understand God's love and that our giving does not produce what has already been made available through His grace, we will not give to get, we will give to further His Kingdom here on the Earth.

Many of you have given to our ministry during the past year. As you know, I have never made wild, baseless promises of special anointings or multifold returns on your love gifts. What I have shared multiple times in our church services is that your giving enables our ministry to fulfill God's Kingdom purposes. I'll give you a brief update on what has taken place during 2017 and how your offerings have impacted people all over the world.

I have been on more ministry trips this year than any other, having gone to:

- ◆ Ireland
- ◆ Northern Ireland
- ◆ Migori, Kenya
- ◆ Immokalee, Florida
- ◆ Canada three times
- ◆ Chatanooga, Tennessee
- ◆ Tulsa, Oklahoma

In all, I traveled during seven out of the twelve months in the year. Thankfully, Kathy was able to go with me on all the trips except the one to Migori, Kenya. Some people may think, "Wow, that is so neat that you get to go to all those places!" It can sound exciting, but these trips are definitely not vacations. Security checks, flight delays, missed flights, long flights of 8-14 hours, changing planes in huge airports where you don't speak the language and so on can be a great challenge. Additionally, driving hour after hour has its own, distinct drawbacks.

Please don't misunderstand; I am not at all complaining. God supplies all the strength and grace necessary, filling each trip with His joy and the results always overshadow the challenges. We have seen people saved, healed and filled with the Holy Spirit. The time in Migori was very unique: the week-long seminar was focused on helping pastors become more spiritually equipped to fulfill their ministry. There were four sessions each day and attendance increased daily. By the end of the week we had a little over 300 present. There were testimonies by people sharing how they were understanding the Bible on a far deeper level than ever before.

Another area that is having an on-going impact is that of our website. As many of you know, we stream all our church services live and record them while they are streaming. When the service is over the recording is uploaded to both our website and to our YouTube channel (You can subscribe to our YouTube channel by going to www.youtube.com and typing "Jim Martin Ministries Dayton OH." When the page opens there will be an option to subscribe on the right side of your screen. Click on that option and register. There is no cost at all to do this and you will receive an email notification each time a new video is uploaded.) We have been contacted by people in various countries sharing that they have been watching for years and how the services have impacted their lives.

Pastors in other nations have sent emails telling us they use our uploaded videos in their churches and for outreach. One pastor explained that since he started showing our services in his church, attendance has gone up over 50%. Some pastors are watching the videos or listening to the MP3

files of sermons, then teaching their congregations what they have learned. Others have enrolled in our school, Grace Ministries Bible College, and are teaching what they learn through the courses.

Speaking of Grace Ministries Bible College, we continue to receive wonderful testimonies from our students and others. As you may know, we do not charge students fees for enrollment, tuition, course materials or recordings of classes. This policy makes it possible for people throughout the United States and other nations to attend Bible college when they believe that is God's will for their lives. Prison chaplains have let us know that they see a notable difference in the inmates who are our students; some of the inmates have actually ministered healing and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to other inmates.

What all this means is that your financial gifts - along with your prayers - make you a part of impacting lives all over the world. Considering all the nations we hear from, you are affecting the lives of untold thousands of people. This is what giving is all about. What you are doing is identical to what the Philippians were doing in the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. Though they personally were not preaching and going to various cities and nations, Paul told them their support meant fruit was abounding to their account (Philippians 4:16-17). This fruit was not some kind of financial increase; rather, it was the lives of those who came to Jesus and were discipled in their walk with Him.

Think of it: You now get credit for all those pastors in Kenya whose ministry has been transformed. All those inmates who have accepted Jesus, been filled with the Holy Spirit, have been healed and are pressing into a deeper walk with God are now "laid to your account." You have had a part in every church that has been started through the help and teaching supplied by this ministry. Some people have apologized for not being able to give more. However, just like Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish to feed thousands, God is able to multiply the impact of every dollar that is received.

Our Father loves us immeasurably. He has given us gifts, the value of which exceeds any gift anyone on Earth could give us. Furthermore, He does not require us to give offerings of any kind - sacrificial or otherwise - in order to receive what He freely releases to us through Jesus. However, He does want us to give, but our giving is so others can experience salvation in Christ, discipleship into spiritual maturity and fulfill His call upon their lives.

There is a very popular movie people watch each Christmas called, "It's A Wonderful Life." I've seen that movie more than once, but I'll tell you what, there's no life more wonderful than the one we have in Jesus! May your Christmas be filled with God's presence, peace and love!

In His Grace,

Jim

P.S. - At this time of year, much is said and sung about Jesus, often by people who really don't understand the fullness of who He is and what He accomplished on Earth. My special offer this month is a sermon titled, "Jesus: The Person and the Message." I am very confident you will be blessed by this sermon and understand more clearly what Jesus came to declare unto humanity. To receive a copy, please use the order form on the next page.

2018 PRAYER AND POWER CONFERENCE DATES ARE SET!

Our 2018 Prayer and Power Conference will be Sunday, April 22 - Friday, April 27. Our host hotel is the Country Inn and Suites on Colonel Glenn Highway. The hotel website is <https://www.countryinns.com/beavercreek-hotel-oh-45324/ohfairbo>. The phone number is 1-937-429-2222. To receive our conference discount, you must contact the hotel directly and ask for the Grace Christian Center conference rate. If you want to consider other hotels in the same vicinity, Google "hotels near Wright State University" and you will have many options.

We apologize, but we will not be issuing letters of invitation to those of you coming from other nations who need a visa to enter the United States. You will need to obtain an invitation letter from another source. Also, we will not be providing financial support to cover expenses such as airplane tickets, hotel rooms or meals. If you have any questions, please send an email to PastorJimGCC@gmail.com.

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_____ Please send me a CD of the sermon, "Jesus: The Person and the Message."

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My love gift for this month is: \$_____ (Make all gifts payable in US funds, with checks or money orders payable to "Jim Martin Ministries.")

Jim Martin Ministries
P.O. Box 291962
Dayton OH 45429 USA

www.jmmgrace.com
PastorJimGCC@gmail.com