

# CHAMPS

Center for Healthy Aging Ministries, Programs & Services



## The Richness of Christmas

As a child do you remember dreaming of what you would get for Christmas? You may have spent hours poring through the Sears & Roebuck or Spiegel catalogs. Similarly, children today do the same thing using the internet or store advertisements. Gift lists were often long, but our expectations were far less. Thinking about this may cause you to realize a large part of the joy of the holidays was the expectations and visualization of what we ‘might get’. Parents made it abundantly clear that you weren’t going to get everything you asked for. Thinking back, this was a valuable lesson about life itself.

Then, as now, not everyone had an abundance of money to purchase gifts. That allowed us to learn about limits and that money does not dictate joy. Under duress one can still have a memorable holiday season. Enjoyment came from talking as a family about what we could do that would be ‘special’ for each other. In some cases imaginative gifts were made out of what was ‘on hand’. This, in itself was challenging and revved up our creative side.

Additionally, our parents challenged us to look beyond our ‘needs’ and ‘wants’ to explore the neighborhood for individuals who may have needs equal to or greater than our own. This forced us to have a new perspective on being ‘rich’. Self centeredness was diminished and outreach to others emphasized.

As a result of our restricted resources individuals learned several valuable lessons:

- **Giving something you made to another person results in a sense of pride; in fact, you watch with heartfelt expectation to see their facial reaction when they opened ‘your gift’**

*Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace; may the poor and needy praise your name. (Psalm 74:21)*



- **Family time can take on great meaning while sitting around ‘working’ on secret projects together—gifts that only you can make for one another**

*Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. (1 Peter 3:8)*

- **One gift made or bought with love and sacrifice is a treasure**

*...and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:2)*

- **Be thankful for what you have not what you don't have; volunteer to help the needy**

*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? (1 John 3:17)*

- **Richness in one's life is more than material items**

*...and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. (Isaiah 58:10)*



- **Sharing with others is a heartwarming experience**

*There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:11)*

- **No matter how little you have, give to the Lord**

*Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. (Deuteronomy 14: 22)*

This year, focus on how you can brighten a holiday, such as Christmas for someone else. Consider doing an outreach project through your church:

- Read Luke 2—**The Birth of Jesus** with a 'shut-in', person in a nursing home, assisted living, or a friend
- Deliver food baskets to shut-ins
- Set up a visitation teams to go see individuals in nearby nursing home or an assisted living facilities
- Call an old friend you haven't been in touch with
- Volunteer alone or as a family for a mission project e.g. Open Door Mission, Salvation Army, etc.
- Invite a widow, widower or lonely individual to spend a holiday with you in your home
- Explore your neighborhood to identify individuals who are alone-invite them to your home, or reach out to them in other ways



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