

## **James L. Holly, M.D.**

### **As Christmas Approaches**

**By James L. Holly, MD**

**Your Life Your Health**

*The Examiner*

**December 21, 2017**

As Christmas approaches, most of us look for a way to make this Christmas the best ever. Experience has taught us that success in this area is not achieved by buying more and bigger and better "stuff." Therefore, as we prepare to gift those we know and love, the reality is that most often, Christmas is made special by giving to those who cannot return the favor. Once, my wife and I had the opportunity to help a person in need.

As we met their need, we discovered these principles of how we and they can know that a gift is from God, and particularly how a monetary gift can be known to be "from God."

1. It is just that, "a gift," and not a loan. The debt incurred is not financial which requires repayment; it is a debt of gratitude which will be repaid to others not to the one who gave the gift. Truly, this is the gift "which keeps on giving," as the echo of the original gift reverberates through the years, ricocheting from one person to another, each successive person not knowing the connection with past gifts.
2. It carries with it the responsibility of good stewardship. Gifts are often squandered, lost, or discarded, but a "gift which is from God," is treasured, cared for and passed on to others.
3. It is for more than a person expects, asks for or than they need at the moment. God always gives more than we ask. His gifts always overflow in abundance.
4. It is given without any suggestion or requirement that more money will ever be given. The meeting of one gift does not obligate God to respond affirmatively to future requests.
5. It is given with a redemptive intent, that is with a prayer that the "goodness of God will lead the person" to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and that the recipient will teach his/her children to love God with their whole heart.
6. It is given with the hope that it will encourage the recipient with the knowledge that they are special and that the gift will have a miraculous effect on the life of the recipient which is beyond the value and the life of the gift. It is like the priest in *Les Miserable* who said to the thief, "With this silver you must become an honest man."
7. It brings great joy to the giver as being the agent of God in benevolence to others is always accompanied by joy.
8. In all of the great religions of the world, the value of a gift is enhanced geometrically when that gift is given anonymously. This is sometimes hard to make happen, but when it does happen, it is especially beneficial to the giver and to the recipient.
9. It is given with the knowledge that something which is old to you is new to others. If you want to take something old and make it new -- give it away!
10. A gift is particularly evidenced as being from God and is of great value to the giver when

the gift costs you something, i.e., when it is a sacrifice, causing the giver to "give up" something in order to give. It is through the sacrifice of the giver that the gift to another gains its greatest value.

This Christmas, as you delight in giving to those you know and love, find someone you do not know and/or perhaps someone whom you do not love and give them a gift of yourself. Give them a gift which is founded on the greatest love: love which does not require anything in return. The baubles you give or receive will never sparkle as brightly as when you have given, them having met, and gone beyond, the needs of others. The toys for your children will never be as wonderful as when they are enjoyed after meeting the needs of others or when toys cherished by your children or are joyfully given by them to others.

And, if your heart is upon "giving a gift" which is "as from God," the opportunities will always present themselves. Before Thanksgiving one year, a teacher in a distant community saw a child crying. When asked why, he said, "We are out of school so long for Thanksgiving, I will be hungry before we come back to school." Who of us could eat another meal knowing that this child is hungry? Oh, we all know there are hungry children somewhere, but we don't know their names and we haven't seen their faces.

This story went from one to another to another. As a result, this child and his five brothers had a wonderful Christmas and through the miracle of H.E.B. gift cards, no matter how long the Christmas Holiday, he was not hungry. Also, his family was given a suburban, which was not new, but it is to them. And, the exclamations of six children who received new, warm coats and new clothes, would assure you that those gifts were gifts from God.

And, as you give a gift which is by its nature a gift from God, give the gift of your love and affection. Is it possible to give too much love? And, how many hugs and kisses are enough to have shared with a person you love greatly. How many expresses of affection, commitment and love would be enough? As I have thought about the answer to how many hugs and kisses are enough, I realized it was a quantifiable number and that the answer could be expressed in an algebraic equation.

In this equation, "X" equals the number of times you kissed your father, your mother, your wife, your child, your grandchild, your brother or sister, or whomever it is that you have loved and that you have lost. "X" equals the number of times you hugged your loved one. And, the equation which accurately expresses the number of times you could have, or would have, or should have kissed or hugged that loved one? It is:  $x + 1$ .

The unknown in the equation is how many times you had expressed love, affection or devotion, but the total --to be completely satisfying -- would always be  $+ 1$ . It is never possible to say, "I love you," often enough. It is never possible to hug a loved one frequently enough. Lost opportunities to affirm another can never be regained and even if you never miss an opportunity, the final figure will always be  $x + 1$ .

Tell your children often and each day that you love them. Tell your grandchildren twice a day that you love them. Hug and kiss your wife or husband. Make sure they know that you are

what you are because of them. Children, take your mother and father in hand at every opportunity; hug and kiss them, savor each moment with them, for the time will come when the only way you can add to the value of " $x + 1$ " is in your memory of the value of " $x$ ."

Oh, I would give a great deal to hug my father or mother once more; I would pay a great price to kiss them once more, but that does not come from a sense of guilt for missed opportunities. It comes from the depths of love we shared, not because we understood each other perfectly, or that we shared a common life, but because in the depths of our soul there is a bond which time and space cannot destroy.

Christmas will be special this year. I give thanks for the hugs and kisses my parents and I shared. I intend to wrap numerous gifts which will be filled with hugs and kisses for all those I love. The day will come when I will not be able to add the "1" to the equation, but I can make the " $x$ " as large as possible.

As you wrap gifts this year, find someone you don't know and give them a gift. Make sure that when you wrap the sparkly baubles for your family that you include lots of hugs and kisses, for in the end, the only gift which will be remembered is the size of the " $x$ " in your personal " $x + 1$ " life equation. As you meet the need of a stranger and/or as you give a stranger a gift, it may just be that you can add a "1" to the " $x$ " of your love for another.

This year more than ever, the greatest gift we all want is "peace on earth and good will toward **All** men." May it be so in our lifetime!