

**General Topics :: Some Countercultural Gift-Giving Thoughts****Some Countercultural Gift-Giving Thoughts - posted by roadsign (), on: 2007/11/21 8:53**

The following will be published in the local newspaper:

Some Countercultural Gift-Giving Thoughts

Reduce Reuse Recycle. This waste-reduction philosophy has been around for a while, and has become culturally acceptable. Yet, I wonder how many are applying it to their gift-giving traditions? Oh, I can hear your objections: "I couldn't do that, that's cheap! That's uncaring! What would they think of me!" And so you trudge off to Walmart and join the frenetic multitudes to do "the right thing".

Before you question my "cheap" ways of thinking, first hear me out. There are many considerations. If we really care about our children and other loved ones, wouldn't we want what is best for them? And how much really is best for them? Do they need to be so absorbed in the good things of life that they have no time or mental space to be creative and inventive? Are the newest, latest gadgetries always best— just because "everybody" has them?

What about the untoward by-products of our gift-giving habits: the garbage, the industrial pollution, or the depletion of natural resources? Surely these are not the gifts we want to pass on to the next generation?

We have come a long way from the days when St. Nicolas secretly slipped an orange into the stockings of poor children, or when Grandma gave us a pair of mitts for Christmas. These days we wouldn't think of giving "just" those things. I wonder, why do we feel so obliged to fulfill modern day expectations, even though it is inconsistent with our better judgment?

I admit, I've said nothing you don't already know. Maybe you even crave to be liberated from this trendy practice of excess and indulgence, but you don't want to become a Scrooge. You want to give what you want to give, not what somebody else wants from you. Let me suggest that it should be that way! The Bible says, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." That is liberating! Even God does not want us to give of ourselves simply because people expect it, or because someone is making us feel guilty. Really, this instruction calls us to be countercultural, and to liberate ourselves from the insatiable expectations of society. It is a call to take more thought about our giving decisions.

Really, we should also consider those from whom we purchase our items. After all, they too are receiving our gifts—and in fact, they may gain the most! We might inadvertently be supporting exploitive enterprises; or on the other hand, we could be encouraging and benefiting a family. I suggest that the ideal gifts benefit everyone and exploit no one.

Could it perhaps be true that the highest quality of giving has nothing to do with money or material things? For many—and especially those who "have everything", the best gift could very well be our time and focused attention. If there is anything our young ones might lack, it is most likely that! Money can never be the best gifts!

For sure, these ideas are countercultural. But isn't that in keeping with the much-longed-for spirit of Christmas?

DE

Re: Some Countercultural Gift-Giving Thoughts - posted by roadsign (), on: 2007/11/21 9:21

This article may seem woefully inadequate as an evangelistic tool, but I feel it is an important step. Before one can begin to consider giving themselves to Christ, they must become conscious of the fact that they really have given themselves to a man, that is, the world. They really have made humans into their god. That could include their own children – who soon figure it out, and –“milk” the idolatry for all its worth.

Lost people are gripped in fear: fear of letting go of the cultural entanglements, fear of being rejected for not –“measuring up” - fear of losing –“self”. Much gift-giving endeavors are peace offerings to human gods - ultimately hoping to satisfy the "self"-god.

Though the message may seem simplistic for sophisticated church folk, it speaks to them too. Let’s admit, the general way of thinking has become no different than the world. The people of God love the world – hoping it will help them find –“self” and preserve it.

But Jesus said, "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." Matthew 16:25

Giving ourselves to Christ is radically countercultural. It is the ultimate way of giving. God desires that we give our entire selves to him, not because of obligation and not reluctantly, but because we wholeheartedly desire to do so!

That is the kind of repentance that delights our Lord. It is the true and only path to freedom.

Diane

Re: Some Countercultural Gift-Giving Thoughts - posted by enid, on: 2007/11/21 9:23

Last night, I heard a sermon about being content.

In the early 20th century, the average person wanted 27 things in order to be content, 18 of which were essential.

Fast forward to today, and in the 21st century, the average person needs over 500 things in order to be content, and 100 of those they consider essential.

1 Tim 6v8, 'And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.'

Today, people seem to want Christmas all the time, not for Christ, but simply for getting gifts, presents etc.

And, once again, it is another condition that has crept into the Church.

But, we should be more willing to give, not just talking about gifts, but giving to the work of God.

We should lay up treasures in heaven.

God bless