

**"How to Enjoy  
the GREATEST Christmas EVER!"**

**"GIVE TILL YOUR RICH"**

**In Memory of Else Doerflinger**

INTRO...

-**Last week** I talked about how bad things are "**out there**"... **this week**, let me get personal, real personal and share with you how things were "**in here**" (point to my heart) just 3 years ago.

-ADVET CONSPIRACY VIDEO ROLL-IN... <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVqqj1v-ZBU>  
- **Christmas '07**

In August 2007 things were as exciting for us as they had ever been...

New Journey, New Job, New Baby, New Church, "New" home...sounds like the makings of a great year, surely the stage for the GREATEST Christmas ever right???

Instead of dream of 250 @ first monthly Preview Service, we had 116.  
Averaged around a hundred for all 4 BUT that included over 20 volunteers from other churches.

Instead of finally enjoying best salary package including insurance of our career...our anticipated salary was unexpectedly reduced by around 50% and our "Cadillac" insurance policy?...out of pocket baby bills exceed 6K.

Instead of finally enjoying living in our first home ever...massive delays & ballooning costs in build out of basement force all 6 of us to live in two rooms 7 months and counting (would end up being a year) ALL WHILE finding out that a big error had been missed by our \$500 lawyer resulting in a DOUBLING of our ESCROW.

ALL TOTALLED---we have completely depleted our reserves and cashed in our rebates and even forced to request "family loans" just to make our house payment.

Instead of enjoying decking the halls for our first Christmas in our new home...Christy falls of a ladder putting the bow on the star at the top of the 9 ft tree and ends up in the ER. Bill (with surprising speed) comes in for \$1,100 more out-of-pocket expenses the week before Christmas.

In a matter of months we endure one massive blow after another, after another... No \$\$\$ for kids presents. I kid you not, the only presents they got were from others (we just told them the "house" is our present this year). At a time when I'm supposed to be able to provide more for me and my kids than ever before I am faced with the first ever scenario of no presents from us under the tree. Kids seemed to be fine... but I was miserable and to be honest, I think it has become clinical depression. Christy?...she was too overwhelmed to be depressed.

**-Why tell you this?** Because I realize how irritating it can be to have someone who has no clue what you are feeling dispense “Hallmark Card” quotes or “Happy Christian” verses when you’ve given in to cynicism and convinced yourself that its just a matter of time before the “other shoe” drops.

**---Now...here’s the irony... there was absolutely no reason why that couldn’t have been the GREATEST CHRISTMAS EVER!!!**

**THE PROBLEM** wasn’t my circumstances, luck, etc. **THE PROBLEM** was my **FOCUS**. My focus was on **ME** and **MINE** vs. **HIS & OTHERS**.

**AND THAT’S WHY I’M CONVINCED THAT IF WE CAN MAKE CHRISTMAS ABOUT WHAT ITS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT--- HIM & OTHERS...ANYONE CAN HAVE THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS EVER!**

**We do that by...**

**Last week--- SERVING others through and for HIM**

**THIS week---the 2<sup>nd</sup> Key to enjoying the GREATEST Christmas EVER is through GIVING to others through and for HIM**

## **PRAYER!!!**

We begin with a **COMMAND** from Scripture preserved for us as inspired by the Holy Spirit through Paul...speaking to Timothy as a mentor and elder of a flock of followers of Jesus...

### **I TIMOTHY 6**

<sup>6</sup> Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. <sup>7</sup> After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can’t take anything with us when we leave it. <sup>8</sup> So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. ...

<sup>17</sup> Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup> Tell them to use their money to do good. They should ***be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others.*** <sup>19</sup> ***By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.***

It’s easy to say we don’t have enough to share with others and frankly, if you feel that way, God doesn’t want your \$\$\$ (He’s really after your heart anyway). But beware, if you think you don’t have enough to share...**YOU’LL NEVER HAVE ENOUGH TO SHARE!** Those who are known for their generosity are often more likely to have little...those who have much tend to be so paranoid of losing it and afraid they don’t have enough they hoard it. The following text assures us that those who trust Him...who do give cheerfully in faith, will never lack for resources to give to others or wonder if their own needs will ever be met...

## II CORINTHIANS 9

<sup>6</sup> Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. <sup>7</sup> You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." <sup>8</sup> And **God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.** <sup>9</sup> As the Scriptures say, "They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever."

<sup>10</sup> For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.

<sup>11a</sup> **Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous...**

Now, some of you may be saying..."But I don't have anything"... this text is for you...

## MARK 12

<sup>41</sup> Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. <sup>42</sup> Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.

<sup>43</sup> Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. <sup>44</sup> For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but **she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.**"

Please notice this widow lived in an agrarian culture, that is to say she did not have a WalMart for groceries (they had gardens) or NICOR for gas (they had wood, coal etc.). So she didn't give her grocery or gas bill to the church and trust God to supply. Unless God gives you a burning bush vision and says otherwise, He expects you to trust the wisdom He has shared in hundreds of other places all throughout scripture regarding wise financial planning. THAT SAID, \$\$\$ was just as coveted and was in fact necessary to purchase those things you could not grow or trade for...it was essential for an improved quality of life. So she gave all of something that everyone else sought after nonetheless. She didn't use that fact that it was all she had in way of \$\$\$ to prevent her from giving it and in fact, Jesus says quite bluntly that her 2pennies was worth way more than larger sums from those who had plenty left over.

Some may wonder what this has to do with the Christmas narrative...well, look no further than the famous John 3:16

## JOHN 3

<sup>16</sup> "For **God** loved the world so much that he **gave** his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

God GAVE...God GAVE the greatest GIFT imaginable. In fact, it is truly an unimaginable gift. So again, as with last week's key on SERVING... GOD ISN'T ASKING ANYTHING OF US THAT HE HAS NOT ALREADY DONE HIMSELF.

Is God enough? Can He be trusted? Has He not served and given much more than we ever could? So why do we hesitate? Why stay bound by the warped, messed up view of Christmas and everyday living that is so obsessed with self-interest(s)? BE FREE! RISE ABOVE! BREAK AWAY from the mess of Christmas has become and welcome God's truth, love and grace into your heart and in your life. I promise that if you do this WILL BE THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS EVER!!!!!!