



a d v e n t
C O N S P I R A C Y

Relational Giving

John 1:1-18

Ask almost anyone about the celebration of Christmas and you will undoubtedly hear something about gifts. In fact, for most Americans, Christmas is all about the gifts – both giving and receiving. In a way, this is very appropriate as Christmas really is all about a gift. The gift of incarnation. The gift of God. The gift of Immanuel. The prophet Isaiah wrote prophetically concerning the coming of the promised messiah, saying:

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14 (NASB-U)

Immanuel. God with us. What an amazing thought captured in this simple name. The heart of advent is to prepare to celebrate this incredible truth: God came to us. God's gift to us was Himself. God's gift to us was relational.

What would it look like for us to give relational gifts to honor and celebrate God's relational gift to us?

Read John 1:1-18.

The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one.

Everything was created through him; nothing—not one thing!— came into being without him. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out.

There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.

The Life-Light was the real thing: Every person entering Life he brings into Light. He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn't even notice. He came to his own people, but they didn't want him. But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves. These are the God-begotten, not blood-begotten, not flesh-begotten, not sex-begotten.

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

John pointed him out and called, "This is the One! The One I told you was coming after me but in fact was ahead of me. He has always been ahead of me, has always had the first word."

We all live off his generous bounty, gift after gift after gift. We got the basics from Moses, and then this exuberant giving and receiving, This endless knowing and understanding— all this came through Jesus, the Messiah. No one has ever seen God, not so much as a glimpse. This one-of-a-kind God-Expression, who exists at the very heart of the Father, has made him plain as day.

John 1:1-18 (The Message)

Spend some time pondering the realities and implications of the Incarnation.

- What does it mean to you that Jesus is Immanuel? What does that look like?
- How can you follow in the footsteps of Jesus and be incarnational? How are you doing in that? Are you living an incarnational life?

We want you to give gifts this year. We hope that you will radically generous in your gift giving! As we say 'no' to overspending and the spirit of consumerism, we want to say 'yes' to the spirit of incarnation and relational gifts. ***What could be more honoring to Christ at Christmas than doing what He did?*** As He gave Himself relationally to us, we can give ourselves to others!

- One of the ways to give relationally is to make gifts for the people in our lives. This can be anything. Give a meaningful picture. Write a poem or a letter. Create a piece of art. Invest something of yourself and something of the person receiving it into the gift. What are some ways that you will make relational gifts?
- Not all of us are crafty or comfortable making gifts. What would it look like to literally give the gift of relationship – of quality time spent together this Christmas? This can be anything. Go fishing. Go to a ball game. How do you enjoy spending time with this person – or better, how does this person enjoy spending time with you? What are some ways that you will give yourself in relationship to others this year?


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