



Hi Kids,

I know each of you is looking forward to some special gifts this Christmas from your Moms and Dads, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and other family members. In the Bible, people also received many different gifts. See if you know, before you look in the Bible, what the gift was that each person gave or received.

1. What gift did Cain give as an offering to the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Genesis 4:3)  
Contrast that with the gift that Abel gave as an offering \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Genesis 4:4)
2. When the children of Israel were asked to give something for their new sanctuary, what did they bring to Moses and the leaders? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Exodus 35:22)
3. Jacob gave to his son Joseph a special piece of clothing. Do you know what type of garment it was? \_\_\_\_\_ (Genesis 37:3)
4. When the prodigal son returned home, what special gift did his father place on his finger? \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 15:22)
5. When Elijah asked the woman of Zarephath if he could have something to eat, she gave him her last meal of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
(1 Kings 17:12)
6. After Jesus spoke to the 5,000 men and their families, he fed this large group with a miracle from a small boy's lunch. What was in the boy's lunch? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 14:17)
7. One day Jesus and his disciples were in the temple and they observed a poor lady putting 2 small coins in the offering plate. How big was her gift? \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 21:3-4)
8. What special gift does Jesus give to all of us? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Romans 6:23)

**Answers (NIV Bible):** 1. Fruit of the soil; firstborn of his flock 2. All kinds of jewelry 3. Robe (coat) 4. Ring 5. Flour & oil 6. Five loaves & two fish 7. It was all she had to live on 8. Eternal life

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## THE JOY OF HABITUAL GIVING

by Gordon Botting, DrPH, CFC

### A Modern Day Ebenezer Scrooge

While looking over his list of potential donors, the director of a small town non-profit charity noticed that the town's wealthiest man had never contributed to their organization. So he made an appointment with this gentleman and after the usual greetings he approached the subject of a donation by saying, "Sir, our research indicates that your income is well over half-a-million dollars per year, yet you have never contributed a dime to this town's worthy charity.



Would you not like to give back to your community in a significant way?"

The wealthy man replied, "Did your research indicate that my aged mother is dying after a prolonged illness and that her medical bills are several times her annual income? Or that my sister's husband passed away in a traffic accident with no insurance, leaving her penniless with three children to raise?"

The now humiliated director could only say, "Sir, I'm

sorry. I did not know your family situation." Then, to the director's astonishment, the man replied, "So you see, if I don't give any money to them, why should I give anything to your organization?"<sup>1</sup>

### Ross Perot and Vietnam

In total contrast to the above true story of a modern day Ebenezer Scrooge is the Christmas story of Texas computer millionaire Ross Perot. During the Vietnam War he decided to give every American prisoner of war a special Christmas present.

Stewardship is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality and finances.

“Ceasing to give, we cease to have; such is the law of love.” (*Richard Trench*)

Perot had thousands of individual gift packages prepared and wrapped for shipping. He even chartered a small fleet of Boeing 707's to fly the gifts to Hanoi.

Unfortunately this was at the height of the Vietnam conflict and the Hanoi government refused to cooperate. Government officials informed him that absolutely no act of charity was possible while the American bombers were devastating their villages. Even after Mr. Perot offered to assist in rebuilding what the Americans had destroyed, they refused to cooperate.

Undaunted, Perot flew his planes to Soviet Russia where his staff mailed each package, one at a time, from Moscow's central post office. Each package was delivered intact.<sup>2</sup>

### Jimmy Dunne and 9/11

In contrast to both of the two previous illustrations is the ongoing story of the rebuilding and healing of the small investment banking firm Sandler O'Neill following the terrorist attack of 9/11. In a recent interview by *Newsweek* Chairman and Editor-in-Chief Richard M. Smith,

senior managing principal Jimmy Dunne acquaints readers with the firm's continuing story. He recounts how on that fateful day he had been out playing a game of golf. When he returned to the pro shop he couldn't get through to his office and so he called home. Because his wife was so upset, a close friend took the telephone and said, “Jimmy, get used to the fact that everyone in your investment company is dead.” Fortunately that statement was not completely true, but they had lost 66 of their 171 employees, including two of their top three executives.

Dunne remembers thinking, after it became obvious that this was an attack by a cell group of Osama bin Laden's terrorists, “Okay, he tried to kill me, he killed most of my friends, so whatever he wants, I'm going to do the opposite. So if he wants to scare us, I'm not going to be afraid. He wants us to quit: we won't quit.”

But more importantly, as families of the company's deceased employees began to call, he felt an enormous responsibility to them. He recognized that these

survivors would go through infinite amounts of emotional pain and grief, which the firm could not address — but they could address the finite financial issues.

To relieve some of the financial pressure, he reasoned, why not pay the salaries of the deceased employees to their surviving families, at least to the



end of 2001? Or what would happen if we could do it for two years? Three years? Then the suggestion

was five years. “A lot of our guys said no one would do that.” Dunne said, “So what?”

Five years have come and gone and they pulled it off. More recently they extended these benefits to the surviving families for another three years. When Dunne was asked if that was a tough call, he replied, “The discussion lasted only 12 seconds. We got the partners together and I said, ‘Listen, this is what we

want to do.’ Everybody said, ‘Great.’ ”<sup>3</sup>

### How About Us?

You are probably wondering why I am telling you these three stories. First, the difference between story one and the other two narratives is obvious — greed versus giving. Far too often both adults and children see this festive season as a time of receiving, be it a company bonus or lots of toys under the Christmas tree.

Second, too often we honor and say “wow” about those individuals who give a large one-time gift to churches or charities, like the Perot account, instead of systematically giving on a regular basis throughout the year.

May we determine in our hearts that in 2008 we will be more like the investment bank Sandler O'Neill or the Galatian believers in the Apostle Paul's day (1 Corinthians 16:1-4) who methodically and regularly contributed to their local congregation's needs as well as to the world church's requests.

#### Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> Based on a true story told by Tim Cestnick, expert, author, and public speaker on tax and personal finance.
- <sup>2</sup> “The Christmas Story” by Charles Scriven, *Signs of the Times*, December 1991, pg. 6.
- <sup>3</sup> “Rebuilding – and Healing” Richard M. Smith Interview of Jimmy Dunne, *Newsweek* web exclusive, 2007, [www.newsweek.com/id/36225](http://www.newsweek.com/id/36225).