

## What Will You Unwrap This Holiday Season?

By Jeanne Loehnis

The 2008 holiday season is upon us. The month of December offers:

- **Christmas**, the traditional Christian holiday, a celebration of the birth of Jesus, whose life represented pure love
- **Hanukkah**, a means of celebrating the impenetrable spirit and devotion of the Jewish people to God
- **Kwanzaa**, an African American celebration focused on the traditional African values including family, community responsibility, self-improvement

None of these sacred occasions included the giving of gifts at the onset, though most Americans who honor them now include a gift exchange as part of the celebration. And merchants are currently advertising all the “must buys” for this season. Depending on age, personal beliefs, religious customs, and the current financial situation, the commercial emphasis of the season has the potential for spreading excitement and joy, or for some, fear and perhaps disgust.

- Do you participate in the gift exchange often associated with the holidays of the season?
- How do you respond to the shopping frenzy?

Perhaps the exchange of gifts is simply tradition for you. Each year, you gear up for the hectic pace, make lists of people you want to remember and items you think they will enjoy, and off you go!

Maybe your family tradition involves holding off on special purchases throughout the year while saving up for the joyful occasion in December when faces light up with the excitement of opening gifts following months of anticipation.

Perhaps the gift exchange is, for you, a reminder of the gift that each of these persons has been in your life. Given the American lifestyle and the likelihood that you no longer live in close proximity to family members, the holidays are the perfect “excuse” to reconnect and the gifts serve as a reminder during the rest of the year of the mutual love you share.

When was the last time you paused to ask yourself: “What is it I truly want to express with the sharing of material items?” Each of the holy celebrations during the month of December holds an element of love, of the generosity of the God of our understanding, of the giving-ness of the human spirit. Material gifts, whatever they may be, given from the love that indwells the giver, are precious. Material gifts, whatever they may be, when given only out of habit or because they are expected, do not hold the same value.

How about this question: “What is it that I most want to receive this holiday season?” The question does not imply a focus on the material and what I hope to “get” from others in the form of presents under the tree. Rather, it suggests a focus on the personal “experience” that you wish to have as you participate in the holiday, in the activities, in the gifting.

What do you wish to experience?

- Do you want the holiday “rat race”, non-stop shopping, and frustration over long lines at stores?
- Do you want to spend long hours in the kitchen followed by exhaustion from both activity and overeating?

Or, do you envision a time of happiness and joy?

- Do you see family gathered and cherishing one another’s company?
- Do you see laughter on children’s faces?
- Do you feel peaceful, loving, and happy?
- What gift could you receive that would ensure you have what you most wish to experience?
- From where are you guaranteed to receive that gift?

Have you heard the notion of “giving what you wish to receive”? Neale Donald Walsch wrote about it in his book, *Conversations With God*, and expanded on the notion in a February 2008 blog post (\*). He says:

“That which you choose to give to another will become real in your experience as well. What you wish to experience, give away.”

Now, you cannot give away what you do not possess. In order to give away the happiness, peace, love, and joy you want to experience, know that you must seek these within yourself. Cultivate these qualities as you move through the shopping, the baking, the social events of the season. Seek first within your own heart the gift that only **you** can give. Inner joy, inner peace, and true love all live and grow and blossom within you. This holiday season, unwrap your inner joy and be the gift you wish to receive!

(\*) Find the Conversations With God blog posting at:  
<http://blog.beliefnet.com/conversationswithgod/2008/02/give-the-gift-you-wish-to-rece.html>

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***Lyrics for the page:***

*Unwrap Your Inner Joy*

*Look no further than your heart  
for the joy of Christmas morning,  
for that glorious inner feeling  
of the Christ within you now.*

*Look within to know the Presence,  
not without to see the presents.  
Deep inside you are the essence  
of the Christ child and God's Love.*

*This Christmas morning  
unwrap life's greatest gift.  
This Christmas morning  
find never ending bliss.*

*Unwrap your inner joy.  
Unwrap your inner joy!*

*Turn to the One living in you.  
Spirit of Love brings joy ever true.*

*Glorious Spirit now I see!  
It's Your joy that moves within me  
as I willingly assume Thee  
as the Guide which lights my way.*

*It's a gift that's never ending:  
all this joy that I am sending.  
And all people who are tending  
to the Christ receive it now!*

*This Christmas morning  
unwrap life's greatest gift.  
This Christmas morning  
find never ending bliss.*

*Unwrap your inner joy.  
Unwrap your inner joy!*

*Turn to the One living in you.  
Spirit of Love brings joy ever true.*

*So unwrap your inner joy.  
Unwrap your inner joy!  
So unwrap your inner joy.  
Deep and abiding joy!*

*Unwrap your joy!  
Unwrap your joy!*