

Beyond the Presents

People mean more than presents at Christmastime. Understanding that truth makes the answer to this question easy: What does one give the person who has everything – or nothing? Give him or her yourself.

Think about Christmases past. What stands out most about those great holiday times? Not a sweater, or a tie, or a new dress or a diamond ring.

Not even a little red wagon filled with sacks of fruit that might have been a part of the delight of your younger years.

The memorable moments of Christmas are tied up in relationships with people. People make the season enriching. Or, vice versa, the lack of association with others for whom we care – especially at Christmas – can make it the worst of times.

Society, generally speaking, understands this principle, for the yuletide is a time of togetherness. So, don't think of Christmas as a dollars-and-cents proposition. The items we buy for others are only symbols of our love for them. We can show that love in more meaningful ways by ...

- Visiting a nursing center and spending a few minutes with an elderly person who is experiencing the awful “aloneness” of the holiday.
- Picking up a toddler and bouncing him on your knee. I still remember, with great fondness, when my grandfather did that for me.
- Speaking a word of encouragement to someone who has suffered a death in the family.
- Listening while an acquaintance spills out the heartbreak of a personal problem.
- Writing a note to someone who is many miles away.
- Offering a compliment to the preparer of a meal.
- Sharing in the washing of dishes.
- Joining with others to sing carols on the porch of a shut-in.
- Participating in some games with a group of youngsters.
- Telephoning a Christmas wish.
- Finding the means to cause people to laugh. Laughter is a grand form of medicine for the heart.
- Baking bread or cakes or cookies and giving some to a friend, or even a stranger.
- Whispering *I love you* to a parent or grandparent or aunt or uncle.

Whatever any of us may buy for presents, then, really isn't all that important. It's our appreciation for them in a look, a touch, a word, a quiet moment together that counts.

Be a people person this Christmas.

– Beecher Hunter