

Unusual Gifts in 2018

We've survived another Christmas shopping season with its deluge of Christmas ads. I'm used to ads appearing in my email inbox and Facebook feed, but since early November, I've experienced the digital equivalent of crazed Black Friday shoppers at Wal-Mart. Only this time, it's the products coming at me screaming, "BUY ME! BUY ME!"



Apparently, it works. The National Retail Federation estimates we will spend \$465 billion this year. That averages to \$700 for every American. (Based on what my family is spending, there is someone out there spending a whole lot more than \$700 per person on their list.)

Sorry if I'm not contributing to the American economy like I should, but that doesn't keep the retailers and marketers from trying to get my business. *"Look no further. This right here is the only gift you'll need to give this year."*

I'm amazed at what people will buy at Christmas. Sure, they've got to get Cousin Eddie something, but *that?*

Pickle Candy Canes

Long-Distance Touch Lamps. The lamps are connected via an app, so each one lights up when someone taps it. Next time you're missing each other, just touch the lamp and it'll literally brighten up the other person's day! When they've seen it light up, they can touch the lamp as well, and it'll change colors to let you know that they're feeling the same way. *Or you just pick up the phone and call them. Y'know, have a conversation.*

A Hot Head Heating Pad. Send this company a photo and they'll put it on a heating pad. Cousin Eddy can relieve his neck pain with a heating pad with your picture on it.



I suppose it wouldn't be Christmas, though, without an unusual gift or two.

When Jesus was an infant, men showed up at the home of Mary and Joseph with highly unusual gifts for a baby. What kid needs gold, frankincense, or myrrh? Yet what seem like unusual gifts to us were highly significant for the Son of God resting in His mother's arms.

As Cliff Lea points out in *Bible Studies for Life*:

- A gift for His royalty. Gold is the finest and most precious metal, and showed great value from the giver to the recipient.
- A gift for His Deity. Frankincense is a glittering, odorous gum obtained by making incisions in the bark of several trees. It was essentially an aromatic used in sacrificial offerings.
- A gift for His humanity. Myrrh was a much-valued spice and perfume, used in embalming and perfuming ointments.

Let me encourage you to also give an unusual gift to Jesus this year: your life. Trust me: that's exactly what He wants.

The gift of your life is certainly not out of place to Jesus, but others may see your gift as odd—even weird.

- *It's OK to like Jesus, but don't go overboard.*
- *Don't get all religious and waste your life.*
- *Don't throw away your potential in this world.*

Those who've never fully committed their lives to Christ don't get it. It's when we "gift" our life to Jesus that we get it back.

"Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12:24-24).

Yet He not only gives us life, He gives us a rich, full life.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

And that's far better than anything you'll find under your Christmas tree. Even from Cousin Eddie.

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