

# ***It's All About the Heart***

By Bernita Tuinenga, Executive Director of Volunteers in Service

*What can I give him, poor as I am.*

*If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.*

*If I were a wiseman, I would do my part.*

*Yet what can I give him, give Him my **HEART**.*

It's the time of year when we hear a lot about "giving;" in our churches, letters in the mail, and just about any place you enter, there is opportunity to give in some way. Whether it's a food, clothing or toy drive or giving to the "red bucket" for the Salvation Army; or an added dollar to your bill at the grocery store; it's all around us to give to a cause that grabs our heart.

For me, Christmas brings out conflicting emotions. I want to fight the "run to the stores and grab all the sales I can find" excitement but find myself enjoying the satisfaction of finding the best deal out there! In a society that is so materialistic, it's hard not to get caught up in giving lots of things, particularly to my family, and when I find the best deal, I can do that! I love my family and it warms my heart and brings me great joy to watch them unwrap presents that are carefully picked out for them. Giving presents is exciting and the eager anticipation felt days before by my family is exhilarating!

Therein lies the conflicting emotion in me. Am I equally as excited to give to the Lord my tithes and offerings or do I do that just out of guilt and obligation? When I see a sale and it's for 10% off, I quickly dismiss it as not enough off to be worth my time. So how is my attitude different when the Lord asks for 10% and I think, "really, that much? Can I afford to give Him that much?" That's a hard one and something I know I need to wrestle with. After all, I can't literally hold or see or wrap the purchase of my gift to the Lord. I can't watch the Lord open the gift with glee on His face and excitement in His voice; so does that affect my desire to want to give to Him?

I recently heard probably the best sermon I have ever heard on tithing. The emphasis was not on obligation, guilt, or a specific benchmark that is required to fulfill the expectation; but rather the focus was on the motivation of giving and the unraveling of the question "Why." Why do we give to the Lord? Is it because the Bible says we should or because deacons suggest we should because they need the money to balance the church budget? Or do we give/tithe because we want to, we get to, because we believe and understand that what we have belongs to the Lord in the first place and we desire out of gratitude and love in our hearts to give back some of which we were given. Giving really is a matter of the heart and if our heart is full of love and gratitude for what God has given us, both financially, and through the gift of giving us His one and only son, who came into this world in human flesh, to experience the emotions and brokenness of our lives, only to later die a grueling death as a sacrifice for our sins so that we can LIVE ETERNALLY, then wouldn't we want to give? After all, that's how much God loves us! That's how much He cares and that's how much He wants our hearts; not just a piece of it, but ALL of it. Serving and loving Him and giving sacrificially. Why do we give gifts to our family? Because we love, because we want to celebrate and because we want to share in the joy it brings. Why do we give to the Lord? Because we love, because we want to celebrate and because we want to share in the joy it brings to Him and to others. The eternal investment in giving to the Lord is far greater than anything we can buy here on earth.

So join with me this Christmas in worshiping the King; sing joyfully songs of praise that honor Him the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and give cheerfully and lovingly to the Lord all that belongs to Him. This Christmas, give the Lord your heart; not just a piece of it but ALL of it and just imagine the glee on His face when He receives that present. Merry Christmas!