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Christmas Giving for Christ

By Melvin Amerson

Soon the seasons of Advent and Christmas will be with us, and we will be inundated with commercials and product advertisements on television, radio, and the internet. Consumerism at times overshadows the focus of the season. Many believers exchange gifts with co-workers, friends, and family, yet fail to present the season's honoree — Jesus Christ — with a special gift fit for a king.

In the midst of the current economic downturn, some shoppers and retailers are returning to some financial practices from a by-gone era. For example, some stores have revived “layaway plans” that require purchasers to make regular payments without taking possession of the merchandise until the price is paid in full. Layaway plans help us distinguish between needs and wants. Further, they teach lifelong lessons on patience, diligence, and self-control. Another all-but-forgotten strategy for financing Christmas giving is the “Christmas Club Account.” These non-interest-bearing accounts allowed savers to set aside money each pay period for the sole purpose of purchasing Christmas gifts. Both of these financial practices were extremely popular prior to the credit card era.

Perhaps it is time for the church to revive these practices, as well. Consider establishing a church-wide

layaway plan for a special ministry gift that will honor Christ. Beginning in early November or the first Sunday in Advent, encourage members to make an additional “layaway offering” by placing a gift of \$10, \$15 or \$25 in a special, designated offering envelope. Or establish a church-wide Christ Christmas Club Account for people to set aside funds for special ministry projects or mission work that will bless others at Christmas. Unlike a bank account, this account yields eternal dividends in the form of life-changing expressions of love. It is a spiritual investment opportunity.

The resources raised should be used to expand or enhance ministry and bless others. Since Christmas is about the celebration of the birth of Christ, these opportunities to “give to the King” will help members take their focus off the commercialism of Christmas and refocus on the birth of Christ. ✚

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