



A New Holiday Tradition: Giving God's Way  
by Kris Swiatocho

*Originally published by Crosswalk.com*

I'm not sure what it is ... perhaps boredom, age, anxiousness, or simply the Holy Spirit telling me something needs to change. But I have really gotten frustrated with how I've spent the holidays.

As a never-married, single adult, holidays can become predictable, traditional, even boring. Sure, they are filled with a ton of food, awesome decorations and a ton of presents. I mean, my mom can outdo Martha Stewart any day.

Thanksgiving always includes several days of my parents cooking, cleaning their home and decorating. Now, I am thankful that my mom still cooks a turkey (a real turkey versus a turkey breast), a fried turkey or sandwich meat. But when she turns the fireplace on even when it's 70 degrees outside to "get into the holiday spirit," I have to draw the line.

At Christmas my family's home is filled with decorations, sweets and presents, to the point you can barely get through the front door. My family loves Christmas so much that even the toilet tissue is red and green. Don't get me wrong; I have many incredible memories of the holidays. I am also very thankful to God for those memories, realizing a lot of single adults have terrible memories of the holidays. Even today, many single adults may not even have a home where they can go. So what do I have to complain about? It's not so much a complaint, as it is wanting it all to mean more.

Three years ago, I asked my parents about changing some traditions during the holidays. I wanted to have memories that include my "family" (versus just me) doing something that would last, something that would bear fruit. I wanted a new tradition. We started to pray and asked God what to do. Would it be helping at a mission, bringing a family into our home, giving out blankets to the homeless, or putting together meals for the elderly?

I also wanted our gift giving to be more about God and His salvation for us. I wanted to GIVE MORE than I received. I felt that a lot of our gift giving had become more about the gifts than the message. Giving a gift without the message of hope, love, and salvation, would mean nothing. It's not enough to just do good things; they must be in His Name and for His purpose. However, God would teach me a new lesson. It's also about giving with joy.

### Giving With Joy

OK, what is giving with joy supposed to mean? Of course I have joy when I give. God then revealed to me what true joy looked like in the letter Paul wrote in Ephesians.

Paul understood what Christmas was truly about. He understood that giving someone a gift was much more than just a physical item; it was telling them about Jesus, but also doing it with joy. Paul would suffer, go without, and sacrifice to do what he could to give more than what he would receive. He would do it all with joy.

Just think! Though I did nothing to deserve it, and though I am the least deserving Christian there is, I was chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. I was chosen to explain to everyone this plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning. God's purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church. This was his plan from all eternity, and it has now been carried out through



Christ Jesus our Lord. Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of his glad welcome. So please don't despair because of what they are doing to me here. It is for you that I am suffering, so you should feel honored and encouraged.

— Ephesians 3:8-23

### God Answered Our Prayers

Edith and Kathy would be the first of several people God would bring to my family to help during the holidays. Edith was a single woman in her 60s, living without some of the basic comforts that we have every day. Edith also had a single daughter, 28 years old, who had cancer and was living out her last weeks in a nursing home. We took groceries and some clothes to Edith. When we got there, we were able to share with joy about Jesus Christ. She told us that she had not seen her daughter in weeks because she didn't have a car and that the nursing home was 45 miles away. It was obvious that we needed to make the drive.

When we got to the nursing home, her daughter Kathy was up and around, walking and talking. We spent several hours with her, sharing about Jesus Christ, asking her if she died today would she know where she would go. Kathy told us that she had accepted Jesus Christ when she was young but still struggles. Here she was a young woman, dying. I then asked her if there was anything we could do for her. She said I would love some new pajamas and a pizza. What a joy it was to buy her some pajamas (I think they had bunnies on them). We all sat around her bed, eating pizza that afternoon. Two months later, Kathy passed away.

I am so thankful that my holiday traditions have changed ... that my gift giving is done with God's incredible message of hope, love and His salvation, all bundled with the joy that only Christ can give. I challenge you to make some changes this year. Start a new tradition of giving. God's way.

Kris Swiatocho is the President and Director of TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries and FromHisHands.com Ministries. Kris has served in ministry in various capacities for the last 20 years. An accomplished trainer and mentor, Kris has a heart to reach and grow leaders so they will in turn reach and grow others. She is currently working on her third Bible study, *From the Manger to the Cross: The Men in Jesus' Life*.

Her second Bible study, *From the Manger to the Cross: The Women in Jesus' Life*, was published last fall and is available on her websites. Her first book, *Singles and Relationships: A 31-Day Experiment*, was co-authored with Dick Purnell of Single Life Resources.

TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries helps churches, pastors and single adult leaders evaluate, develop and support their single adult ministries through high-energy speaking engagements, results-oriented consulting and training and leadership development conferences and seminars. Click here to request a FREE "How to Start a Single Adult Ministry" guide.