

Christmas Giving That Gives In Economic Hard Times

1. It is best to pay for Christmas without using credit. This can be accomplished by using Christmas clubs, change in a bottle, or buying gifts little-by-little during the year. This will avoid the "December demand" on your finances. A couple in my office recently told me they "did not spend one red cent for Christmas; they put it on the credit cards!" Unfortunately, this is not an unusual perspective for Americans.
2. If you do use credit cards, pay off the balance at the end of the month. A \$1000 Christmas charged on credit cards and paid off at monthly minimum payments will take you eight years and \$900 interest to pay off. That means that little Katie's kindergarten Christmas will be paid off as she graduates from eighth grade! Not a good practice!
3. Determine in advance what you can actually afford to spend for Christmas. Come up with a dollar amount and stick to it! Impulse buying usually results in spending more than we should. A certain gift may be "just perfect" for your friend but that does not mean you can afford to buy it.
4. Buy a few generic gifts in bulk that can be divided and given to male or female. Decorative candles, for instance, can be divided, individually wrapped, and given to separate individuals.
5. Remember that Christmas "shopping" is not necessarily synonymous with Christmas "giving". Some of the most appreciated gifts are those in which you give of your time and talents. Things like cookies, candies, free babysitting, or even backrubs make excellent Christmas gifts.
6. Don't buy yourself a Christmas gift! Someone calculated that last year 69% of Americans bought themselves a gift. Focus on Christmas giving, not Christmas receiving.
7. Give a special gift to a needy individual, family, or organization. It does our hearts good to occasionally give anonymous gifts to those who can never repay us.
8. Invite an away-from-home college student to your home for the holiday.
9. Send a special Christmas "care package" to a deployed military someone.
10. Remember whose birthday we are celebrating at Christmas. Some families bake a special birthday cake for Jesus as a reminder of "the reason for the Season" to their kids and grandkids.