



*An Advent
wrapped in Love.*

This Christmas...
By Courtney Cohen

I recently asked my young child what the best gift was that she's ever been given, expecting her to say cars or Barbies. She surprised me when she said, "all the love that I have in my heart." As I reflected on what she said, I began to think back on Christmases past, and I thought about some of my favorite "physical" gifts – Hot Wheels, Barbies, stuffed animals – each held a dear place in my memories. But I kept coming back to gifts of love: my grandmother holding my hand during a candlelight Christmas Eve service, my dad beaming with love when I finished my oboe solo at church, and my mom working tirelessly to take care of my sister and me after my dad passed away. These are the gifts that I truly cherish.

We find ourselves in a self-centered world these days. It's a me, me, me or an us, us, us culture. Many have stopped focusing on the true



meaning of Christmas and only focus on how they are "right" and "if you don't believe what I do, then you're wrong." At times, I find myself

scared not knowing how one person can make a difference, and I pray out to God only one word, "Help."

This Christmas, I pray for God to remind me that this day is about love. God sent his Son to the world because he loved us – all of us. No matter our beliefs, looks, lifestyles, or any differences, he loves US. We need to share the love he's given us with all others – welcoming all, loving all, and caring for ALL.

Prayer: Lord, guide our hearts as we turn our hearts to another season of Christmas, but one that is filled with your love for all people. Help us to welcome those, clothe those, and embrace those who are different from ourselves. Lead us into a new path of compassion for everyone. Amen.

Leviticus 19:18 "...you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord!"

