



*An Advent
wrapped in Love.*

A Gift Without Wrappings

John 1:1-5

By William Stephenson, PhD

We seem to have some confusion when we observe Christmas. Especially in the whole pattern of giving and receiving gifts. Most of the time they bring pleasure, sometimes pain. Most of the time delight, sometimes disappointment. How much can you expect from a gift? How much can it do in a person's life?

John describes the gift of Christmas in his own unique way. John is saying, first of all, the best way to get an idea across, is to wrap it up in a person. "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God." And then he said what the word was. The word is "Grace."

Even though that word has always been there since creation, God wrapped "Grace" up in a person. "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." That's incarnation: the word and the person becoming the same.

But John is also saying that you can't separate the gift from the giver. John and those early Christians would then make the most daring affirmation that human beings have ever made about God. They said, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself."

How do we enable our incarnations to take place? If your family and friends are anything like my family and friends, then within your circle of relationships is at least one person you are still alienated from. You may have even given them a gift or sent them a card. But you didn't give yourself. There was no incarnation. The word got stuck in your throat. The word that could have made the difference in the gift, in the card. Alienation still exists.

I have a daughter and we rarely speak. This therapist is going to put into practice what he urges you to do. This Christmas, I will "wrap" my gift for her with myself. And then the gift and the giver will be the same. And then I will pray that a new birth comes to us.

Become your gift. That's what makes the birth of Jesus more than a historical event. It makes the birth of Jesus a "now" experience.

O God, some of us struggle in separation with silent longing. Lord, help us to reach out to each other and say, "I love you." Just as on that night long ago when You reached out to us and said, "I love you." Amen.

