A thought for Christmas

Tom Jones

I love the Holidays. Thanksgiving and Christmas are two of my favorites – mostly for the Turkey and Cranberry Sauce. Pumpkin pie comes in there too.

But I can recall the stress that came with the season. As a Dad, I always wanted Christmas to be “special”. When we are in debt – that is a formula for compounded trouble.

Somewhere along the path of life we begin to wrongly associate things with “special.” I forgot that the parts of Christmas I remember the most are the things I did with my family and not the gifts I unwrapped. Kids play with the boxes more than the toy.

The truth is that I can only remember a few items I got for Christmas over the years. Some of them I only remember because of the pictures. What I do remember from my childhood was the fun I had when we spent the holiday around family.

I remember a particular Christmas when our children were small. One year we decided to get rid of our TV. I think we made the decision in October or November. When Christmas time came, we got the usual long list of things they wanted for Christmas.

The next year when Christmas was close, we asked what they wanted. My oldest thought for a little while and then said, “I think I could use some socks.” My youngest couldn’t think of anything he needed.

WOW! I never realized how much TV feeds dissatisfaction with the things we have. Car ads, vacation destinations, toy commercials are all designed to make us desire things we do not need. The Bible tells us with food and raiment to be content (1 Timothy 6:8). It then goes on to say that the love of money causes us to be tempted and snared (verses 9-10).

Somehow, we fret that our children are going to be damaged somehow if we do not give them lots of stuff – stuff we can’t afford, and truthfully, stuff they don’t need.

How can you make sure you can face January with joy? Start by not wasting December.

1. Set a budget for Christmas. Draw out cash. Spend only the cash you can afford. Never charge Christmas gifts planning to pay it off with a Christmas bonus, Christmas gifts of money, or over time. It is not worth it.
2. Plan to spend time with your family. Make things to give as gifts. Cookies, ornaments, bird houses are all gifts that have a double blessing. They are inexpensive and they build wonderful memories. There is the added blessing of teaching what Christmas is about. It is not about toys.
3. Spend some time counting your blessings. Focus on what you have – not what you don’t have (and don’t need).
4. Spend some time as a family helping someone else. A visit to a children’s home, senior citizen’s home, hospital, or a soup kitchen can do wonders for your perception about how blessed you are. Just raking the leaves for a neighbor who cannot do it for themselves can be a blessing to your family.

Make this Christmas special not stressful.