

**NBC Devotional  
December 20, 2023  
“A Family Tradition”**

When we first started a family, Brenda and I wanted to develop family patterns and traditions that encouraged our kids in the Christian Faith. And like most young parents, through trial and error, many of our ideas came/went while others have stood the test of time.

One idea that stood the test of time is a simple family tradition for Christmas morning, implemented with the hope that our children would always understand that at Christmas, we celebrate God’s greatest gift to the world.

In preparing for Christmas morning, we put four slips of paper (each one listed a gift and scripture verses to read), as well as, four objects symbolizing each gift for our kids to hold/share, in a small Christmas wrapped box. The label on the box said, “To the Mackey Family” from “Your Heavenly Father”. It sat under the tree in the center and slightly forward of all the other gifts.



*A Star for Heaven*

On Christmas morning, before we opened presents from anyone else, we opened this box which represented God’s gift to our family.

For us, Christmas morning began with this great passage:

“God so love the world that He gave us His Son, that whosoever will put their trust in Him will have abundant and eternal life.” (John 3:16)

While salvation in Christ brings many blessing/gifts to our lives, on Christmas morning, we highlight four of those gifts. Within God’s Gift of His Son, there are at least 4 specific gifts that He offers to each of us!

1. The first gift God offers to us in Christ is the gift of Forgiveness. (The symbol is a small cross made out of nails.)

“Jesus personally carried the punishment for our sins in his own body when he died on the cross, so that we can be finished with sin and live for righteousness.” (1 Peter 2:24)

“If we admit our sin and desire to turn away from it, Jesus is faithful to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

2. The second gift God offers to us in Christ is the gift of Freedom from Sin’s Power. (The symbol is a small piece of chain.)

“For we know that our old self was crucified with Jesus so that we should no longer be slaves to sin... Therefore, do not let sin rule you so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to

sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Jesus as instruments of righteousness.

For sin shall not be your master, because...you are under grace." (Romans 6:6, 11-14)

3. The third gift God offers to us in Christ is the gift of His Constant Presence and Guidance through the Holy Spirit. (The symbol is a dove shaped ornament.)

"When the Holy Spirit comes, He will guide you into all truth..." (John 16:13)

"...obey everything I have commanded you. And certainly, I will be with you always, to the very end..." (Matthew 28:20)

4. The fourth gift God offers to us in Christ is the gift of Living with Him Forever in Heaven. (The symbol was a star-shaped ornament.)

"In Heaven, my Father's house has many rooms; if it were not, so I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me forever." (John 14:2-3)

Of course, our discussions/explanations and the real-life examples we gave for each of the four gifts changed throughout the years as our kids matured and could understand more deeply the significance. After each gift was discussed and as we prayed with our children at the end, we emphasized how important it is for us to continually open these gifts into our lives.

This simple tradition has been kept each Christmas for well over 30 years and our children/grandchildren have chosen to continue the tradition to this day.

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