

## Weekly Bible Reading – Week 19

- ◆ Sunday (Philippians 1:19 – 2:30)
- ◆ Monday (Philippians 3:1 – 4:23)
- ◆ Tuesday (Colossians 1:1 – 2:23)
- ◆ Wednesday (Colossians 3:1 – 4:18)
- ◆ Thursday (I Thessalonians 1:1 – 3:13)
- ◆ Friday (I Thessalonians 4:1 – 5:28)
- ◆ Saturday (II Thessalonians 1:1 – 2:17)

*“Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’*

*“And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’*

It takes so little sacrifice to make a difference. But it will take the whole body of Christ to really impact this globe. A few years ago I gave up a daily beverage at an omnipresent coffee franchise. That freed up enough money to sponsor a little girl in Guatemala. In response to my request my sons and wife made me the happy recipient of a goat and a pig that went to families in need somewhere. I will not know this side of eternity how God used my Christmas gift. But I bet it was more useful than the motorized cooler that goes 14 miles per hour to deliver cold beverages to somewhere for some reason. Are you kidding me?

I often encounter people who say God is judging America because of this sin or that sin. I always tell them I don't know if that is true. But I do tell them that I suspect that God would more likely judge this country because of the incredible wealth and influence His people have squandered. You can make a difference this Christmas. One coat or goat or can of beans at a time.



Chiefland Church of Christ

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# THINGS ABOVE

“If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth”

— [ Colossians 3:1-2 ] —

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## All I Want For Christmas Is . . .

By Dave Burchett • via “Confessions of a Bad Christian”

When I was a kid the holidays politely waited their turn in line. Thanksgiving would take the baton from Halloween and then pass it along to Christmas. Now the Holidays clamor for attention like a spoiled child at the mall. I have been receiving Christmas catalogs for weeks and the stores were filled with Christmas displays by Halloween.

Last year I wrote about what I wanted for Christmas. I started with a list of things I really, really *wanted* — everything at the Bose store, the coolest new phone, several pounds of books, and dozens of DVDs. Then I listed everything I really, really *needed* — uhhhh . . .

Yep. I didn't need a single thing for Christmas. I give bags of clothing I no longer wear to charities every year. We have more stuff in our house than we can figure out how to store. My phone does, unfortunately, still receive calls. I have more books than I can read and more DVD's than I have time to watch. I still want the stuff from the Bose store but Jesus never said this journey would be easy.



So my request to my Sons and the stunning Mrs. Burchett was a bit different. Pool the money you would have spent on me and go to the website of WORLD VISION. Then click on the Gift Catalog and give a gift to people who really, really do need things. There you can find a need for whatever stirs your heart, from animals to education to fresh water provision. Nothing would make me happier. Here is just a sampling from the catalog.

- ◆ For just \$75 you can buy a goat for a family and provide year round milk and cheese
- ◆ How about building a fish pond stocked with tilapia to provide food and income opportunities for a village? The cost is \$200.
- ◆ Like more exotic animals? Your Christmas money can provide an alpaca (\$360) or a camel (\$685) to a struggling family.
- ◆ For \$50 you can contribute safe water to an African school or for \$100 you can help dig a deep well
- ◆ Want to help out children in the United States? A gift of \$25 will fill a backpack and \$500 provides essentials to a needy child.
- ◆ You can contribute to rescue young girls from the sex trade industry or a little over \$100 will give pre-natal care for women who have no hope of that basic need.
- ◆ Help build a health clinic or pay for eye surgery for a child that has no hope to learn without the procedure.
- ◆ Give the gift of musical education, sports, and other educational needs
- ◆ How about offering new hope to children with disabilities by giving a wheelchair or prosthetic limbs to war victims?
- ◆ Feed and care for widows and children affected by the HIV/AIDS plague in Africa.

Can you read that list and not feel just a little sheepish (not the type available for \$105) about our lack of sacrificial giving as Christians in this country? Here is some research from a very annoying and convicting organization called Empty Tomb, Inc. (you can access their website for more information at <http://www.emptytomb.org/lifestylestat.html>). They are also a very important ministry that God has raised up to be a Nathan to our comfortable and consumer Christianity. Here is how America spends some of its resources.

- ◆ In 2003 American consumers spent \$53.6 billion buying jewelry and watches, a 5.1% increase over previous year.

- ◆ U.S. Consumers spent more than \$24.3 billion on candy (2002) and, on average, consumers made \$84.34 worth of candy purchases.
- ◆ We spent \$64 billion on soft drinks in 2003. In 2000 Americans spent \$13 billion a year on chocolate in all its forms (I know ... it just got personal for many of us).
- ◆ In 2000 American toy sales reached \$23 billion.
- ◆ How about \$38 billion spent on state lotteries?
- ◆ Americans spend 600 million on teeth whitening each year.
- ◆ We spend over 300 million on Botox to reduce the appearance of wrinkles.

God help us to see the world with His heart. The good news? We can make a real difference. And the time to start is now. Again, according to Empty Tomb, Inc. we have the potential to literally change the world in the name of Jesus. Here is the analysis of the empty tomb organization.

As described in our research, church member giving is declining as a portion of income, and is currently around 2.59%.

If Americans who identify with the historically Christian church increased their giving to an average of 10% of income, there could be an additional \$156 billion given to the church. If 60% of this amount were made available to expand overseas missions activity, that number would mean an additional \$94 billion available for overseas missions.

One source estimates that \$70-\$80 billion would impact the worst of world poverty and \$5 billion could end most of the 11 million under-5, global, annual child deaths. Also, \$7 billion would be sufficient for global primary education for all children.

You should be aware, that there could also be \$31.22 billion more a year for domestic outreach. And this all on top of our current church activities.

In the gospel of Matthew Jesus talks about the final judgment (Matthew 25:34-40)

*“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’*

