

Have you done your Christmas shopping yet? *All* of it? You've come to the right place, because I'm unveiling my (trumpets, please) ...

Lynn Pryor's Official Shopping Guide for 2017



Full disclosure: there was a time I was a bad gift-giver. Notoriously bad. In high school, I was deeply in like with this one girl. One afternoon in December, I walked the entire Almeda Mall in Houston looking for the perfect gift, and I bought her ... um, a vase. It looked sorta like a blue upside-down squid. To this day, I have no idea why my teenage brain thought every girl's dream was to receive a blue squid vase.

To begin, make a list of those you want to give gifts to. (Go ahead. I'll wait.)

Is everyone on your list? *Everyone*? What about Jesus? After all, it's His human birth we celebrate on Christmas.

But then again, what do you give Jesus? He's the creator of everything, the owner of cattle on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10). What do you give someone who already has everything?

He wants you.

And that's the perfect gift. Consider what He has given you.

1. He gave us life. First, we were given life, although He planned a far richer and fuller life that we experience. We ruined it with sin. We were made in His image, to live in relationship with Him, but we boogered that up by choosing to do things our way.

But from the first moment sin entered our world, God put a plan in place to restore our relationship with Him, a plan to restore that fractured image. To do that ...

2. He gave us the law. With the law, He gave us a clear directive: follow these rules and you'll live. The only problem is we can't keep His perfect law—but He knew that. The greater purpose of the law was to show us we can't make it on our own; we are totally dependent on Him for salvation.

3. He gave Himself. What we couldn't do for ourselves, He did for us. That's why Christ came, and that's what Christmas is all about. Jesus came to earth to give us a gift—Himself.

Typically, when it's somebody's birthday, he gets all the gifts. But with Christmas, Jesus—the One we honor and celebrate—gives us the gift. And the gift He gave is expensive. It cost His life. He gave His life so that we could have life.

- His death gifts us with forgiveness and freedom from our sin.
- His resurrection gifts us with a new life—an eternal life.

It's a gift, but it has to be accepted. It's ours for the taking, but there's a catch.

We have to exchange gifts. We have to give Him our sin: lust, addictions, failures, broken promises, and ... well, everything.

It costs us everything, but it's worth it.

When I was a kid and first got the concept that you're supposed to give gifts at Christmas (and not just receive them), I went to the five-and-dime store (for you kids out there, that's the 60s version of Dollar General) and bought my parents these ugly brown coffee cups.



My mother still has one of the world's ugliest coffee cups!

Around the rim was something that looked like a rabid dog had been sipping a latte. (*I told you I was horrible at giving gifts.*)

I gave my parents these rabid-dog-drool coffee mugs, and they gave me TOYS! Not quite an equal exchange—and it's the exact same way with Christ. What He gives us is far greater and far better than what we give Him.

So place your gift (your life) under the tree (the cross) and embrace the gift He has for you

What about the others on your list?

The following always make great gifts for both family and friends.

- Forgiveness
- An apology
- Love
- The same message of hope and salvation I just shared with you.

I challenge you to find a better gift to give—or receive.

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