

Like a better gift this Christmas?

the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

What will you get this Christmas? An espresso machine (\$399.00)? New power tools (\$79.95ea.)? Membership at a gym (\$600)? A magazine subscription (\$120.00)? An iPod (\$349.00)? A new barbeque (\$1099.00)?

With average salaries now at three times the amount they were in the 1950s (even taking into account inflation and the increased cost of living) we spend a lot more on gifts than we used to. In 2005, the average person purchased 11 presents at about \$50 a present for Christmas. Each year Australians spend billions of dollars on Christmas gifts.

Yet despite the rising cost and quality of presents, we get bored quickly. By next year we've relegated the espresso machine to the back cupboard in favour of Starbucks or McCafe, our DIY projects have gone horribly wrong. The iPod battery has run out, the pile of magazines are building up on the bedside table, and the barbeque sits rusting next to the empty gas bottle and despite our best intentions, we haven't used the gym membership. Our material gifts wear out and we lose interest.

But what if there was a gift that doesn't wear out and never disappoints?

In the Bible, Romans 6:23 tells us that 'the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Christmas is the time when we remember that the God of the universe gave us a present, a wonderful present, his son Jesus.

You might be able to afford the iPod or even the espresso machine, but God's gift is not for sale. If it was, you couldn't afford it. Yet it's absolutely free. Does that mean it's worthless? No, it's priceless and it cost God the life of his son.

God 'spent' the life of his son on you. He 'paid' for you to live forever with him... and that's the only catch... God's gift has to be used with him.

So what does that mean? It means that God's gift offers forgiveness in our relationship with him and this lasts forever, to eternal life, when all other gifts have broken and faded away. This gift is the gift that Christmas is really about, the one that can change Christmas to a day of joy and healthy relationships among people who are forgiven by God and can forgive each other.

This Christmas, find out about the gift that is never the wrong shape or the wrong colour, never breaks, never needs to be returned, and never fails to satisfy and fulfil; Jesus, the gift of eternal life from God.

Prayer

Father God, thank you for the gift of forgiveness through the sacrifice of your Son, the forgiveness that restores us to relationship with you. Help us to understand and receive your gift. Amen