

Merry Christmas 2017!

“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”
2 Corinthians 9:15



Dear Friend,

How many hours does it take? How many items do we look at? How many shops do we visit? All this in search of the “perfect” gift for that special person on our Christmas list.

What “perfect” gift have you received in the past?

What would each member of the State Headquarters staff say if I asked them that question? I wondered. Because their answers were so special, I decided to share them with you.



Two gifts are special blessings to me. The first gift is one that I hinted at numerous times, yet I never thought I would receive. My loving wife, Sally, surprised me one year when she gave me a **Bose Wave Radio**. Now, I listen to gospel quartet music or talk radio almost everyday. Also, for the past few years, my children have given me the **McLeod family calendar** that is filled with many pictures of my children and grandchildren. It also reminds me of their birthdays and anniversaries. When I reflect on these two gifts, I think of the love behind the gifts and how God has richly blessed me as the patriarch of the McLeod clan. – **Wayne McLeod**



It was the Christmas of my fourth-grade year, 1975. My parents (not Santa) spent the wee hours of the morning setting up the larger and/or more coveted gifts in the living room near the tree. Entrance to the living room was forbidden until mom and dad were up, but as usual their rest was short-lived. There for me was a **Ready Ranger Mobile Field Pack**! Oh joy! Oh bliss! It had gadgets, knobs, charts, and even a secret compartment! With this, I knew that I could runaway to the woods and survive for months, even years. I remember with a smile the hours spent with a particular friend acting out our made-up scenarios as evil forces searched in vain for our hideout. While this gift was indeed “memorable,” my **first “real” Bible** is a treasure. It is worn, praise God. In fact, the inscription page is nearly torn out (an overzealous puppy in my past). Today, this page itself has become a gift. It is a remembrance of the great love that my earthly father had for me. He signed it “Love, Dad.” Yet contained within is the greatest gift—from cover to cover my Heavenly Father says to me, “I love you, Abba.” **Beth Bingman**



The Christmas that is still precious in my heart’s treasure of memories goes back to my early teenage years. Prior to World War II, the U.S.A. was recovering from the Great Depression. Giving was a way of life for my parents, regardless of the times and circumstances of daddy’s meager income as a small-town Tennessee barber and of my mother who was a homemaker. It was always a special time when we received our gifts, but this Christmas morning was different. Three red stockings hung on the living room mantle, mine in the middle, being the middle of three daughters. I don’t remember the contents of my sisters’ stockings but mine had the usual orange, nuts, and candy. Daddy watched and waited with such a joyful expression as I found and opened the box at the bottom—a **Shaffer fountain pen** with my name engraved in gold! It was something I had wanted for so long. Looking back, I realize the sacrifice my parents made to give me that expensive gift. It surely cost my daddy more than several days work in the time when haircuts were 25¢ and shaves were 15¢. I am so thankful for my parent’s sacrificial love and the sacrificial love-gift of my Heavenly Father. – **Dr. Mable Ruth Wray**



As a small child, I loved to help my mother bake cookies at Christmas time. I especially enjoyed using the egg beater. My mother surprised me one Christmas by giving me a special gift of a small **egg beater** . . . just like my mother’s big one! It is a reminder to me that while I am here on earth, I am to be just like Jesus, my Saviour. – **Virginia Landis**



When I thought of special gifts received, my mind immediately went to **friends**. In the 35-plus years God has allowed me to be involved in reaching the children, He has brought many friends into my life. There are those friends who are always ready to pray and give, not just financially, but of themselves to encourage, love, and accept me for who I am and for who they see God growing me to be. Friends, like the older saints, who walked beside me during the early days of ministry in Western PA. Friends in Ohio, who called me “the kid” and who helped the ministry flourish as we worked together to reach the children. New friends here in Eastern PA who have continued to love and encourage me. Friends are truly special gifts from God. – **Carol Hoover**



Perhaps the most special gift given to me at Christmas time was the birth of **my firstborn son, Jason**. Doctors told us Jason would be born in January, but he could not wait! Jason was born while Cathy and I were stationed overseas in the Air Force. To have a child is an incredible gift from God. To have a boy was a special thrill for me. To have Jason arrive at Christmas time was just icing on the cake. I cannot even think about that time in my life without remembering God’s only Son, whose coming we celebrate at this special time of year. Jason would share a birthday celebration that was pretty close to the day we celebrate as the Lord’s coming to earth. It makes me smile to think of it, even today. – **Jeff Davis**



Who would have thought that a **little booklet** containing one short story could be a special gift, but it was for me. It was a gift from a friend who was not able to get out of the house to do Christmas shopping, yet she wanted Christmas to be a special time for me. My friend read the story written by Cornelius Vanderbreggen, Jr. In the story, Heinrich and Wolfgang had become very close friends, and, when Christmas came, Heinrich wanted to give a special gift to his friend. He decided that it would be a Bible. The search began, but the only Bible for sale in town cost much more than Heinrich had. After Wolfgang gave his gift to his friend, Heinrich began to cry as he explained why he did not have a gift for Wolfgang. Wolfgang insisted that his friendship was enough, but Heinrich said, “I wanted to give you a Bible.” Wolfgang had wanted a Bible. He wanted to know how good he had to be in order to go to Heaven. Heinrich explained to Wolfgang that he just needed to believe Jesus died to pay for his sins and receive by faith God’s free gift of salvation. That very night, Wolfgang received Jesus as his Saviour. Later, Wolfgang said, “Just to think, Heinrich, that you thought you had nothing to give at Christmas!” – **Rita Lobdell**

Perhaps you have been looking for that “perfect” gift to give this Christmas.

- ★ When you pray for the salvation and growth of the children, you are giving a treasured gift.
- ★ When you take time to call or write a note to a member of the State Headquarters staff, you are giving an encouraging gift.
- ★ When you give financially to this ministry, you are giving a needed gift.

Some earthly gifts are treasures to us, but none can compare to the gift that God gave. He alone could give a *perfect* gift, and He did! God gave the gift of His own Son. The Christ of Christmas is truly the greatest gift ever given to a world full of sinful men, women, boys, and girls.

As we look forward to 2012, I want to express my thanks to you for your sharing in this ministry. I am sure that thousands of children would not have believed and received the gift of eternal life this past year without your prayers and financial support.



On behalf of all of us,

Miss Rita L. Lobdell
State Director



CHILD EVANGELISM FELLOWSHIP OF EASTERN PA, INC. ♦ P.O. BOX 4375 ♦ HARRISBURG, PA 17111-0375

PHONE: (717) 652-7542 ♦ FAX: (717) 652-5132 ♦ WEBSITE: www.cefepa.net