

# HEALTH + WEALTH

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## Christmas Presence

In the lead up to Christmas, it can be all too easy to get caught up and swept along with the season's busyness and the consumer pressure to rush around, spending more money. There is an expectation that we need to buy just the right presents, plan just the right menus and sort just the right logistics for hosting families and friends. There is a tangible tension, with pressure to spend more money, in less time.

Can you remember a day when you had more time and less money? Would you swap that for today if you could? These questions remind us of how our time can be even more precious than our money and why it is healthy to be intentional about both!

Money can appear far more readily available in the form of credit or payment plans and it seems even easier just to pay out a bit more, just to "get it done", "check that person off the list" and move on. And it seems like there will be plenty of time until suddenly, we wake up and this year's Christmas has been and gone!

I was clearing out a cupboard last week and found some "gift vouchers" my youngest son had made for me years ago. He was probably about 6 or 7 years old at the time, but he had designed and printed off 5 little vouchers, each one containing an image he had copied from the Internet (probably breaking copyright laws), printed off, hand-cut and stapled together.

He had presented them to me in an envelope, with a hand-tied ribbon and a grin as big as his face. I can still remember being overjoyed at seeing his genuine joy of giving, and with the thoughtfulness he had put into each voucher.

These vouchers came with strict instructions - they were "Redeemable Only For Mummy", in exchange for a massage, a foot rub, a hair brush (by which he meant time sitting with me brushing my hair), doing a chore, and making a cup of tea (I think he might even have been pushing his luck with using the kettle at that age!).

He had taken time to think about and notice what I enjoyed or what blessed me. Obviously, I loved that gift, I've kept it for 10 years!

Being reminded of my son's gift and seeing how much he has grown in the last 10 years prompted me to think of the importance of giving the gift of "Christmas presence" which in monetary terms is usually free, instead of just the traditional Christmas presents.

To help us curtail our "presents" and increase our "presence" this year, we are trying out a "4 presents rule". This means working together and limiting everyone to four presents in total:

1. Something we want.
2. Something we need.
3. Something to wear.
4. Something to read.

**I believe the gift of quality time, being fully present with those we are with, is still priceless.**

Our hope is that these boundaries will help us spend more time together, both in carefully and thoughtfully choosing these gifts and when we come to opening them on Christmas day.

Don't get me wrong, that boy of mine has let me know exactly what he "wants" this year, with instructions that no other present will do. (Thankfully, it still fits within our 4 present rule!).

We believe being intentional about this is important and it is wonderful to be reminded about the real reason we celebrate Christmas: The presence of God through the birth of Jesus Christ.

I hope you get to see a Christmas miracle this year and know the gift of His presence too.

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