

# CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

Does that thought fill you with joy, with dread, or with a mixture of the two? Christmas is supposed to be a time when sentiments of peace, love, and goodwill predominate. It can be a time of family reunions, fun, and laughter, of generosity and of gift exchanging. Above all, it should be a time of joyful celebration of the birth of our Saviour. But for many, it is a time of great loneliness and sadness; also a time of tension, anger, illness - and above all, debt. The expectations are replaced by anticlimax and the good intentions by recriminations and rows.

It doesn't have to be like this. Throughout most of the western world, we appear to have forgotten one basic thing: the Magi in Matthew 2:11 were presenting gifts to God incarnate, not to each other.

There is no scriptural justification whatever for the frenetic commercialisation in which we indulge in the weeks preceding Christmas. Rather, it should be a time of quiet spiritual preparation, culminating in the celebration of Jesus' birth on December 25th by focusing on giving to Him, not to ourselves.



John The Baptist admonishes his followers to prepare for their encounter with Christ by sharing their possessions with those who have none (Luke 3:11). Jesus himself continually reminded people throughout his ministry that giving to those in need equated to giving to their heavenly king (Matthew 25: 31-46). This should be the focus of our Christmas giving. In this way we can celebrate His birthday, rather than our own. We can keep the party bags for ourselves!

Giving to God as much as we spend on ourselves at Christmas is called '50/50 Giving'. By taking stock of our own spending, and giving a similar amount to charity - especially those working with the lonely, the homeless, and the destitute - we will not only make a huge difference to poverty wherever it occurs, but will make the festive season a lot less stressful and more enjoyable for us too. Happy Christmas!

See [www.casc-aid.org.uk](http://www.casc-aid.org.uk) for further information.

