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*People do not light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in heaven.*

*Matt. 5:15 & 16*

*Our FI family wishes you a blessed Christmas, as we celebrate the Light of the World, which has come to us.*



Christmas is an amazing time of year when you think about the fact that this is the single major event in the last 2,000 years that is celebrated by most of the world. While the birth of Christ and the Christmas story can seem removed from our lives today, and its traditions are subject to debate, the celebration is an overwhelming testimony to the event.

The exact date that Jesus Christ was born is not known. The first Christmas was not celebrated until the year 350 AD when Pope Julius I officially designated December 25 to celebrate Christ's birth.

Over the years there were many traditions which contributed to the celebration of Christmas, among these was the practice of gift-giving.

We have many recorded events in history that show the giving and receiving of gifts dates back at least to the 4th century. St. Nicholas, a Christian Bishop in Turkey, was known for his generosity in giving to those less fortunate than he, as well as giving to children of all backgrounds simply because he felt they needed to savor their childhood, and have joyous times to remember.

This tradition moved throughout the world very quickly, and before the 10th century it is supposed that nearly every country was participating in this exchange. Many people believe that the tradition of gift-giving started within the first year after Christ's birth as the three wise men/kings brought offerings to honor him.

Perhaps the sharing of gifts is in response to the words of Jesus where he said, *"Whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers (the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the naked, the sick and the prisoner) you did for me"*.  
**Matt. 25:40**

There are many things about history we just aren't sure of, but one thing is for sure, the origins of gift-giving had something to do with the example of God giving us His son Jesus, out of love.

In scripture we read,

*"For God so loved the world (us), that He gave us His gift, His only son, that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."*

John 3:16



This past year, because of the giving of friends, Friendship International has been able to reach out to many by:

- sending thousands of dollars of humanitarian aid to the war-torn country of Ukraine.
- inviting orphans and gypsy children to camp through the summer camp scholarship program.
- supporting our national missionaries to serve their people in their home countries.
- helping feed and clothe families at risk.
- helping build and maintain our camp and conference facility.

In scripture we read, *"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* 2 Cor. 9:7

As we near the end of another year we want to encourage you to consider making a contribution that will help us move into the next year, able to continue what God has called us to do for over 30 years.

Our latest campaign to raise funds for urgent sleeping facilities for our campers, will become more acute as we move forward into next year and attempt to meet the need next summer for new cabins for 30 more campers at Friendship Camp.

Won't you please consider giving a generous end of the year donation? May the Lord bless your generosity.

**Your check can be made out to Friendship International and mailed to our address - PO Box 50884, Colorado Springs, CO 80949, or use our convenient online giving tool at [www.friendshipintl.org](http://www.friendshipintl.org) and go to the menu bar at the top and use our safe and secure e-Giving app.**