

THE BIG IDEA: Giving is the unexpected gift

The Take-Off

We're less than 2 weeks away from the biggest gift-giving day of the year.

\$465 billion worth of gifts!

Some will be good ones, some not so good, and many will be unexpected.

This morning, let's talk about how to receive an unexpected gift.

1. Unexpected good gifts

- a. There are 2 types of unexpected gifts, good and bad.
- b. Let's take a peek at how to receive a good one.
- c. [VIDEO / Unexpected reactions GOOD gifts]
- d. It's pretty obvious that we don't need a lot of coaching on how to react when good things come our way
- e. And yet, maybe there's more to it than we realize.
- f. **We receive unexpected good gifts with gratitude, not greed.**
- g. Greed always wants more and never gets enough
- h. Our reactions - even to good gifts - reveal the gratitude or greed in our hearts.
- i. This year, let's learn to practice gratitude.
- j. Hebrews 12:28 / Gratitude for an unshakable kingdom
- k. James 1:17 / Gratitude for good gifts from a good Father

2. Unexpected bad gifts

- a. Let's move on to the more challenging scenario: how to receive unexpected bad gifts.
- b. [VIDEO / Unexpected reactions BAD gifts]
- c. These kids did a great job illustrating how not to receive unexpected bad gifts
- d. It's possible that they did outwardly what we're tempted to do inwardly!
- e. **We receive unexpected bad gifts with belief, not bitterness.**
- f. We need to spend a bit of time unpacking this, but first, let's see an example of what it looks like
- g. [VIDEO / Unexpected reactions BAD gift with GOOD reaction]
- h. When we receive an unexpected gift or circumstance with belief, it means that we trust that somehow what we're experiencing will work out according to God's plan
- i. Belief doesn't mean that we know at the moment that what we're experiencing is good, but that somehow it will work out for good
- j. Romans 8:28 / ALL things
- k. Genesis 50:20 / evil done to us turned to good given through us
- l. Let's unpack another verse before we close
- m. **2 Cor. 5:7 (NIV)** / faith over sight
 - When we walk by faith and not sight, the question isn't what do we see, but what are we looking for?
 - If what we're looking AT doesn't match what we're looking FOR, faith kicks in and we keep looking

The Landing

If we receive the unexpected with greed or bitterness, our hands will close around what we have and it will squeeze out the gratitude and belief we're called to live with.

Proverbs 11:24 (NLT) shows us that one of the most unexpected gifts we've been given is the opportunity to give. How have you received that gift? If you've received it with greed, you've already used up what you could have given. If you received it with bitterness, you're clenching it because you know something bad might happen to you again. But if you've received it with gratitude and belief, your heart is moved to give, and whatever amount you do give won't seem like it was enough.

Giving is the unexpected gift and when we participate in it, we look like our Father, who loved the world and gave. Let's end this morning by participating in The Big Give