



**SPECIAL
DELIVERY**

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FINDING THE RIGHT GIFT

As a boy, I couldn't wait for Christmas to arrive. My older brothers and I would rush downstairs, eager to open our presents. But before doing so, we took it in turns to guess what was inside by examining the shape of the parcel, or by prodding and shaking it. We even tried to identify the contents by sniffing it.

After completing our forensic investigations, we'd announce to the others what we thought lay inside. Then we'd rip off the paper to see if we had guessed right.

Occasionally, this led to great disappointment. Especially when it really was – as predicted – a handknitted woollen jumper from grandmother. Although practical, this was not nearly as exciting as a football shirt! (Naturally, though, we still had to sound enthusiastic over the phone when we called grandmother to thank her.)

Finding the right gift at Christmas can be difficult, as the following story illustrates.

There were three wealthy sons who each gave their mother different presents they thought she would appreciate for Christmas. The first gave his mother a large house with substantial gardens. The second bought her a brand-new luxury car.

Then the third son disclosed to his brothers what he had bought her. He said to them: ‘You both know that mother likes reading the Bible, but her eyesight is failing and she’s finding it difficult to read. So, I’ve found her a parrot, which recites dozens of Bible verses, and he’s been amazingly well trained.’

A few days after Christmas, their elderly mother wrote thank you notes to each of her sons.

To the first son she wrote: ‘Dear David, Thank you so much for the house. Sadly, it’s a bit too large, and I much prefer living in my small cottage.’

To the second son she wrote: ‘Dear Jonathan, Thank you for the beautiful car. Unfortunately, my failing eyesight means that I’m unable to drive it.’

But to the third son she wrote more enthusiastically: ‘Dear Donald, You have the good sense to know exactly what your mother likes – the chicken was delicious!’

I don’t know who was more disappointed that Christmas – Donald or the parrot!

Although it’s a struggle to find the right present to give someone, there is something deeply satisfying when the gift is precisely what the person wanted. Or needed.

The effort in sourcing the ‘perfect present’ is a sign of our love, especially when the gift costs us something personally. Indeed, when I think back to those handknitted jumpers my grandmother made for us, I realise the vast hours she put into knitting those beautiful jumpers (and they really were beautiful). They were an expression of her love and were exactly what we needed.

Tell me: have you ever viewed the first Christmas in this same way? That God loved you so much that he wanted to give you a gift which would be exactly what *you* needed?

The gift God gave would be costly beyond belief. But it would bring joy to all who received it. His gift was so important that it had to come via *special delivery*.

His gift was intended for everyone – including *you*!