



#59911

A-CROSS-TIC CHRISTMAS

Props: Wrap 9 different-sized boxes, complete with bows. Place 1 letter on each package using the word CHRISTMAS. Display the appropriate box as the script is read, placing each to spell CHRISTMAS. The Scripture references may be read, if desired, as each gift is placed in order.

Christmas, only (*fill in*) shopping days left. How do you feel when you hear that? Are you filled with joy and looking forward to the holidays, or does a sense of dread settle in as you think of all that's involved in trying to find the perfect gift for those special people. Does the stress in searching for a parking space, shopping in crowded stores with carols blaring over loudspeakers, finding gifts sold out by the time you finally locate the correct counter, grabbing a quick bite at a fast food stall, feeling exhausted by the time you get back home all make you wish that Christmas were over for another year?

Is this what Christmas and gift-giving are really all about? How can we keep our priorities straight? What can we do to make sure that our Savior Jesus, who is the life-changing Gift of Christmas all year-round, is the center of all our preparations?

Imagine waking up on Christmas morning and finding nine beautifully wrapped packages under your tree, each tied with a shiny bow. Each one is labeled with a letter. These gifts have been sent especially for you from your Heavenly Father. These gifts will last long past the holiday season and will be ones that you will truly appreciate.

The first three boxes deal with our relationships with others. Our first gift box has a "C" on it. We are being offered a **caring, compassionate character**, fashioned after the nature of Christ. When we clothe ourselves with this gift, we will begin to understand what it means to care about the people that God brings into our lives thus, showing the world that we are the holy people God chose us to be. (Colossians 3:12)

We see an "H" on the second box. God offers to give us a new **heart** (Ezekiel 36:26), one which has new and right desires. This gift will help us bear with each other and forgive the person who offends us. When we choose to forgive, we are remembering how the Lord forgives us. (Colossians 3:13)

The third box comes with an "R" - **restored relationships**. Only God can give us His perfect love and His peace that is needed to rebuild our broken associations with others. When you issue forgiveness, you are preparing the framework, so that the Holy Spirit can come and pour the foundation of right feelings. (1 Peter 5:10b)

Our fourth gift is labeled with an “I.” Integrity is the ability to do what’s right regardless of what pressures the world puts on us, knowing that, by so doing, you will please God when you say, “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15b)

Next is the fifth box which has an “S” on it. Our Heavenly Father is offering you **self-esteem**. He wants you to know how important you are to Him, so much so that He was willing to create you, redeem you and sanctify you. He continues to watch over you, cares about everything that concerns you, promises to never leave you alone and will bring you home one day to be with Him for all of eternity. (Ephesians 1:4-8)

A “T” is on the sixth box - **trust**. Do you believe that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord? Can you trust that the plans He has for you are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope? (Jeremiah 29:11) With this gift, we can rest thankfully secure in the knowledge that God is truly in control of every situation.

On the seventh box we see an “M” which stands for **marvelous**. Throughout the whole Bible we see how time and time again God does many marvelous works. This is your opportunity to see the Christmas season in a whole new light and praise God for the marvelous gift of His Son Jesus. (Psalm 98)

The box with the “A” provides us with God’s **armor** to live a victorious Christian life - the belt of truth, the breastplate of God’s righteousness, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. When we are fully dressed we can stand firm in God’s power. (Ephesians 6:10-17)

The final box has an “S” that stands for our **Savior** Jesus Christ. The very first Christmas gift was Jesus who left His home in heaven to pay a debt He did not owe for a people who owed a debt they could not pay. (John 3:16)

When we set the nine gifts side by side they spell **CHRISTMAS**. Not only is our Heavenly Father the Giver of every perfect gift, but He has also given us His Holy Spirit who wants to produce nine kinds of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Just as our God has promised...*for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.* (Philippians 2:13)

We can joyfully celebrate each day knowing that this is what Christmas and our lives are really all about, the best gift of all - **JESUS CHRIST** and our relationship with Him.