



Imagine if everything... every gust of wind, every raindrop – each new season... Imagine if every new thing we received in life came gift-wrapped with sticky tape and paper. Red faced babies in delivery wards ... falling autumn leaves... home dinners served hot with the wrapping paper, wet and translucent and sliding off the gravy...

Would it help? Would there be a net increase in wonder at our world? Would our appreciation for the brilliance and brightness of creation be carried along each day with delightful surprise? Hardly. We'd be annoyed. Everywhere, scissor serfs would find employment cutting paper and peeling it back to expose useful daily products and otherwise unseen vistas.

The fact is, people don't like to be forced into appreciation... or to be told what to think... or feel. But we really should feel grateful appreciation towards God because he's given each of us two lives. That may sound weird but it's true. Twice he's blessed us with life. That's right... twice!

Perhaps a little explanation is needed. A long time ago the earliest humans were given the same living breathing existence that astounds us. But this is where the gratitude problem began. They refused to acknowledge, let alone thank, the giver of life. They treated him badly. And so God took away the very heart of life itself – an unbroken, close relationship with Him. Those first people kept living and breathing for a time, but God punished them with death and so death came to all their descendants.

The second gift of life was the gift of Jesus. Which is why Christmas is so special. When God sent Jesus, he was really sending him to die as a kind of payment for our rebellion – so that we might live again with God forever. You could say Jesus's death makes real living – with God – possible. The Bible puts it like this, 'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'.

Each of the two times God has given us life there's been no charge. Just love. So, here's your Christmas challenge: If life's really a gift, then spend one day considering everything you see around you as a gift from God. Picture every object in your world wrapped carefully with beautiful Christmas paper – the toaster, the lights, the clouds... everything. And as your eyes scan around and finally rest on yourself... consider that the best is yet to come.

Prayer: Thank you God for life both now and eternally

Verse: 'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Romans 6:23