



ARTICLES

2022 Great Gifts for Christmas

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

I am sure your kids (young and old) have a long list of “wants.” I am sure your spouse and parents have some things they would like too. No doubt you’ll give away some toys, clothes, and other useless stuff, but let me nudge you to invest in their soul. Helping them dig into Scripture may be the best thing you could ever give.

Of course, maybe this is just a gift you should give for yourself. Or maybe just print this article, circle your preference, and leave it conveniently for others to find.

No matter how, I hope you find a transformative gift under your tree. A great study Bible is my top pick.

Study Bibles:

I compared several study Bibles, including those on our resource table. My recommendations are listed in order below, but depending on the needs, any of these are great gifts.

Before hitting those specifics let me nudge you to spend more on a quality cover. Paperback and hardcover Bibles don’t last. The bonded leather and imitation leather covers are much better, but genuine leather is worth the cost

(not that you need the \$215 Blue Goatskin ESV Bible). You should consider spending between \$60-\$100 for a Bible that will last.

You should also consider the font size. Most Bibles are now 8 or 9-point, but some are smaller. You can get large (11-point) and sometimes giant (13-point+). It matters, so check the product details before you buy. Now, to the actual reviews

[ESV Reformation Study Bible](#): The 2015/3rd edition is the most preferable option to me as it clearly helps explain things from a reformed perspective. It is not as colorful as the other options, but incorporates reformed creeds and beliefs in such a way that I can't resist recommending it. (The Condensed edition is more convenient to carry, but 1/2 the notes. The Student edition is coming in 2022 and may be the church's new gift to our freshman.)

[ESV Study Bible](#): This one is the most thorough of all the options. It's loaded with colorful maps and charts. It is widely endorsed by Bible scholars and seems to be the new standard.

[NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible](#) (previously the Zondervan Study Bible): Is very similar to the ESV Study Bible. Sometimes notes are better and sometimes not. If you really want the NIV 2011 translation, this or the one below are great options.

[NIV Study Bible](#): The 2020 update is loaded with notes and colorful maps and charts. Generally the notes are shorter than the above options. So on the one hand it's more concise, but on the other lacking depth.

[NIV/NLT Life Application Bible](#): This is significantly different from the other options as it gives less explanation and more application. Personally, I've found it sufficient at answering basic questions about the text and very helpful in actually applying it to life. That said, the Holy Spirit always applies the text to my life with or without any study notes. Prayerful reading will always lead to practical direction.

[NET Full-Notes Edition](#): This is a great resource for insight into the Hebrew and Greek. The footnotes fill 75% of each page and explain the rich meaning behind the text. This is a fabulous study tool. The translation and notes are free

online at <https://netbible.org/>, so the print addition is not really essential.

There are many more study bibles. They target many different audiences and issues or come from a popular pastor. I'd recommend getting a book (for your audience, issue or by the popular pastor) with one of the study Bibles I've listed. Get one of the best study Bibles and then look for books that address specific issues.

Best Translation:

This is the big question that will greatly impact your study Bible options. I've been doing side by side comparisons on my sermon text for a while with my Bible software, Logos (It's amazing and quickly replacing my use of printed books). My comments below are based on that research.

I like NIV 84 as it's what I've always read and it's in our pews. However, it's been replaced with the NIV 2011 which moved more toward a thought-for-thought translation. The ESV is preferable for its readable word for word translation of the original language texts. However, it is sometimes awkward and difficult to understand. The NET is an excellent word for word translation with notes explaining the translation choices. I am conflicted over choosing between these three option and I do think you will love whichever you have.

I no longer recommend the NLT as it simply strays too far into interpreting the text. It is easy to read, so if you're looking for something to understand at first glance, this is your best option. Just know you may miss the depth of the original text in favor of a particular interpretation of the translators. The NASB 1995 is a good choice as it is similar to the ESV. I've not looked much at the newer NASB 2020 or MacArthur's Legacy translation. Maybe, next year.

Sidebar: The consistory briefly discussed replacing the pew Bibles, which led to discussion around translations. The elders, earlier this year, concluded the ESV is preferable, but that we value the use of each of these translations. My hope is that more and more people bring their own Bible on Sundays to take notes.

Stocking Stuffers/Bible Accessories:

[Colored Pencils:](#) Gel Pens work, but I find them no better than a crayon. Highlighters too often bleed through pages. So I recommend any colored

pencils for underlining and writing notes.

[Bible Book Tabs](#): This will make your life much easier as you try to find different passages. Some Bibles already have “thumb indexes” or tabs, but if not, it's a great stocking stuffer.

Merry Christmas and Happy shopping!

God Only Knows

By Pastor Doug Shotsky

[Proverbs 14:10 \(NIV\)](#) Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy.

One of the tensions that each of us deal with is the struggle we have with the internal reality that no other human truly understands us, and at the same time, knowing we have a God who understands us better than we understand ourselves.

When we're dealing with hard emotions that we experience through trials; whether sadness, guilt, shame, depression, anger, loneliness or any other myriad of a range of emotions; there is literally no other person that can completely understand what we're going through. And this goes for the opposite end of the spectrum as well; when we're experiencing success, happiness, accomplishment, or joy, there is truly no one else who shares our exact perspective.

On the flip side of all this, being human, we can be subject to having a skewed perspective of the reality of our situation. Through the ups and downs of our feelings, emotions, and circumstances, only God really understands things from an eternal perspective.

Knowing this, my prayer for myself and others is that we will more readily be willing to be graceful with others, because we can recognize that there is no one but God who can understand or fulfill our deepest needs. So take the pressure off of yourself and others, and draw near to the only one who understands and the only one who can satisfy all we need and are looking for.

Love Offering

By Adrea Daane

God gave us the greatest gift of all—Jesus! We give to others throughout the Advent Season as a response to God’s awesome present for us.

At the ARC, it has been our holiday tradition to take up a “Christmas Love Offering” (previously called White Gift) during the Advent Season. Through this tradition, we experience the joy of giving from the resources God has blessed us with.

Each Sunday School class will collect a second offering during the weeks of Advent. (Please explain to children that one offering goes in the regular offering and the other should be given to a Sunday School teacher.)

Looking to give beyond one of these opportunities? You can also give your gift by placing it in one of the white offering boxes (please label these gifts in an envelope so we know they are designated for this cause).

Our recipient this year is the family of Travis and Jessica Schultz. Travis and Jessica Schultz, son and daughter-in-law of Don and Linda Schultz, live in Waupun with their four boys, Tanner, Landon, Ryden, and Grayson. They are very active participating in things such as soccer, wrestling, swimming, camping, hiking, Scouting, and baseball.

Here is Jessica’s Story:

I found out I had cancer the first time around when I was 34 and pregnant with our last child Grayson in 2013. We were lucky, as I was in the very early stages of cancer and was able to have a mastectomy during pregnancy and they waited until I gave birth for additional treatment. I didn’t have to go through any chemo or radiation the first time around. I had some additional surgeries and had to take a cancer pill every day. I was very blessed.

Fast forward 8 years I went in for my yearly breast MRI in August of this year to make sure everything was still okay. I expected to receive a call the next day to tell me everything was good and to see me next year. That was not the case....instead it was; Jess we have a couple of spots that we need to check out further. And so the testing began, CT Scans, Bone Scans, Full Body Scans you name it all to find out that my breast cancer is back and this time worse than last. I have a triple positive cancer this time around. Positive for Estrogen,

Progesterone and Her2. I will need a more in-depth chemo regimen treatments that will take a year to complete. I will have to complete 6 rounds of chemo – 1 treatment every 3 weeks, after that 6 weeks of radiation and then the remainder of the year I will continue to receive a special Her2 shot.

My Chemo started on Wed. 10/6, and I currently have 2 rounds behind me. I am able to receive treatment here in Waupun. They have not been easy, and I have been very sick. We are still trying to figure out how to make them easier on me.

I am grateful for all the help the community has already done for supporting us with meal trains, gifts, etc. It has blessed our family so much and makes it so much easier for me to concentrate on me and getting better and not worry about little things like meals or grocery shopping. We are blessed to live in sure a great community that has such a big heart. We greatly appreciate everything that everyone has done for our family. Thank you!

I Choose Joy

By Jessa Ter Beest

Please take some time to read the lyrics of this song by For King and Country.

Lately, I've been reading, watching the nightly news
Don't seem to find the rhythm, just wanna sing the blues
Feels like a song that never stops
Feels like it's never gonna
Back when I was young, my eyes were full of life
But now that I am older, I live at the speed of light
Feels like the cycle never stops
Feels like it's never gonna
Gotta get that fire, fire, back in my bones
Before my heart, heart, turns into stone
So somebody please pass the megaphone
I'll shout it on the count of three
One, two, three
Oh, hear my prayer tonight, I'm singing to the sky
Give me strength to raise my voice, let me testify
Oh, hear my prayer tonight, 'cause this is do or die
The time has come to make a choice

And I choose joy
Let it move you, let it move you, let it move you
Yeah, I choose joy
Let it move you, let it move, let it move you

How often do we choose joy? Do we let joy move us even in the worst of circumstances? I have noticed in my life that I choose joy way more when I am spending time in the Word and in relationship with God. He reminds me to “rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!”

My prayer is that this Holiday Season (and throughout the year) we would all slow down enough to choose joy. Choose joy with your kids, choose joy with your difficult family members, choose joy when the line at the store is just too long. Choose joy and let it move you, because “this is do or die.”

MESSAGES

During this season of thanksgiving we would like to express our thanks to our church family for all the love they have given our family before and after Randy’s passing. We are so thankful for all the prayers, kind words, cards, food and every other gesture during the past few months. We especially thank Pastor Kevin and Pastor Doug for everything they did for our family. Also, those who shared their gifts by providing music at the funeral and to all those who helped serve food. God used all of you to bring comfort and healing. As we look back at one of Randy’s last conversations, he said that we will make many decisions in life but the only thing that matters is Jesus. We are so blessed. Thanks again.

Marcene
Levi & Megan and family
Luke & Sarah and family
Tom & Lindsey and family

To our church family,
Thanks for all the cards, food, visits, prayers, and phone calls. Thanks to my shepherd, Jane, for bringing the blanket. They were very much appreciated.
Thank you-
Willy & Carol Jansma

May I express myself to the congregation of my church. I could not attend but want to tell you may you be so blessed by the kindness you have shown me. You have been a treasure in my life. You have kept me up to date through cards, letters, and visits. I enjoyed them so much. You truly are a gift in my life here in the nursing home. Because my age is 97 the longer I live the purpose is to help others and I am doing that for people. My thank you seems so small compared to all you have done, but it comes from my heart.

Blessings and love-

Arlene Henning

EVENTS



Alto Reformed Church
December 2021

December 05 **Christmas in Alto**
Join us for caroling around Alto at 5-6pm and then for a neighborhood party at The Old Feed Mill (across the road from church) any time between 6-8pm. Enjoy a bonfire, refreshments, crafts and the Christmas story.

December 13 **Women's Worship Night**
Ladies, join us at 7pm for an evening of worship.

December 15 **K-5th Grade Christmas Program Practice**
All K-5th graders should meet in the sanctuary at 6-7:30pm to practice for the Christmas program.

December 19 **"Come Adore" Mixed Choir Cantata**
The Mixed Choir will present the cantata "Come Adore" during the Sunday morning worship service at 9:30am.

December 19 **"A Star is Born" Christmas Program**
The PreK-5th graders will bring the message of Jesus' birth beginning at 8:30pm.

December 24 **Christmas Eve Service**
Join us at 4pm for an evening of worship and celebrating the birth of Jesus.

For detailed information:
Call 620.348.5505 or email office@altoreformedchurch.org

NEWS

Incoming Elders

Dewey Bille

Jerry Medema

Miley Ter Beest

Incoming Deacons

Tom Bruins

Andy Derksen

Ben Leonard

ARC Update:

By **Tim Vink**

At the close of November 2021, we have now walked, crawled, or sprinted into six months of our 18 month launch period for the Alliance of the Reformed Churches. My heart overflows with thanksgiving to the Lord Jesus. Let me share a few highlights.

- 45 churches from the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan have completed their process of legal and legitimate transfer from the RCA to ARC. Their steps have been bold and convictional, with votes in the 95-99.5% range...like 604 to 9 for example in a large Michigan church.
- 125 more churches from coast to coast in the U.S. and Canada are in process and in conversation with ARC leaders. Many of these churches agreed to wait until after the October General Synod to take more decisive steps, but this second wave is much larger than the first.

Library: More Recommendations!

Beyond the division around Covid mandates, **there are two major issues that stir a tremendous amount of anxiety and tension in our nation and no doubt in your family.** So, as we come into this season of family gatherings, I urge you to stand on God's truth. The following two books will help you understand what the Bible teaches on these issues. What are they?

1. Transgenderism: Maybe you solidly believe the Bible's teaching on marriage. **"Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say"** by Preston Sprinkle goes well beyond this into explaining the various forms of transgenderism and how believers should respond to the hot issues like bathroom usage and sports. If you truly want to know what you are talking about, this is a must read!

2. CRT (Critical Race Theory): CRT is continually working its way out of politicians and the media. It is a huge concern for many school districts and is coming to our teachers through [CESA 6's Center 4All](#). Voddie Baucham's **"Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe"** will give you his enlightening perspective as a black pastor who knows the subject well. He explains in detail

how misinformation and deception in our nation regarding racism and sexism are attacking the mission of the church.

They're both in the church library and on Hoopla (a digital library you can access through the Fond Du Lac library).