



“Rico Tice has the ability quickly to catch your attention and then lead you to face up to things that really matter in a lasting way. This book offers you a way to celebrate Christmas like never before. Let me encourage you to read *The Ultimate Christmas Wishlist*, brush aside all the extraneous Christmas tinsel, and discover the amazing gift that God is offering you. You won’t regret it.”

TERRY VIRGO, Founder, NewFrontiers; Author,  
*Life Tastes Better*

“A skilled writer, Rico helps us see how the birth of Jesus means that we can know hope, peace, purpose and confidence. That is far greater than any gift we can receive on Christmas Day morning.”

TONY MERIDA, Pastor, Imago Dei Church, Raleigh, NC;  
Author, *Love Your Church*

“Rico has a wonderfully disarming ability to connect the good news of Jesus with real life. This book doesn’t bounce off our resistant exteriors but instead gets under our skin and penetrates into our minds and hearts. Put it on your wishlist and your give-list this Christmas!”

JAGO WYNNE, Rector, Holy Trinity Clapham

“This book is typical Rico: Scripture, stories and simplicity. This book explains what the Bible teaches, has great anecdotes, and is easy to read. Buy plenty, and give all but one of them away for Christmas.”

GRAHAM DANIELS, General Director, Christians in Sport

“Rico’s writing and speaking are always the same: no fluff or hype—just the best story ever told. After an especially hope-dimming couple of years, this book will help you either discover or cherish your ultimate wishlist!”

MICHAEL HORTON, Westminster Seminary, California;  
Author, *Ordinary*

“Christmas, more than any other time of the year, is when we experience meaning and crave more of it, feeling like we get a small taste of life as it is meant to be. Rico Tice shows us how to enjoy the gifts of hope, peace, purpose and confidence that Jesus alone gives. Easy to read, winsome and intellectually satisfying, this is a wonderful book.”

ADAM RAMSEY, Lead Pastor, Liberti Church, Gold Coast,  
Australia; Author, *Truth on Fire*



*The*  
ULTIMATE  
CHRISTMAS  
WISHLIST

---

 RICO TICE 

---

the goodbook  
COMPANY

The Ultimate Christmas Wishlist  
© Christianity Explored Ministries, 2022.

Published by  
The Good Book Company



[thegoodbook.com](http://thegoodbook.com) | [thegoodbook.co.uk](http://thegoodbook.co.uk)  
[thegoodbook.com.au](http://thegoodbook.com.au) | [thegoodbook.co.nz](http://thegoodbook.co.nz) | [thegoodbook.co.in](http://thegoodbook.co.in)

Unless indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 2011 Biblica, Inc. Used by permission.

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Rico Tice has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as author of this work.

Cover by Faceout Studio | Art direction and design by André Parker

ISBN: 9781784987701 | Printed in India

# CONTENTS

1. What would you like for Christmas?	7
2. Hope	15
3. Peace	29
4. Purpose	43
5. Confidence	57
What next?	63



## I. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS?

What would you like for Christmas?

I find that a difficult question to answer. But I know I do need to answer it—otherwise, it'll turn out like the year I was presented with a gift that, on unwrapping it, turned out to be a dog bowl. Which would have been great, if I'd happened to own a dog.

It's not that there's nothing I want for Christmas. The problem is with what I would like, for two reasons. Sometimes, the thing I'd like is beyond the budget of the person who's asking—I'd like a trip to the World Cup. I'd like a "top of the range" golf club. I'd like a new right knee. Other times, it's not just beyond their budget but their power. I'd like inner confidence that means I'm not knocked back by criticism and don't respond like an enraged teenager. I'd like a sense of hope for my struggling friend. I'd like peace in Afghanistan and protection for a friend of mine who works there. I'd like a guarantee that my children will grow up to enjoy wholly happy and purposeful lives.

I'd like to lose 30 pounds. It's hard to say which is least likely to happen.

But just imagine for a moment that time, budget and ability were no barrier. What would be on your ultimate Christmas wishlist? Think big. Get beyond the boxes and the socks, the books and the pyjamas, the bubble bath and the handkerchiefs. You can have anything you want.

What would you ask for?

I guess your answer will vary according to your circumstances. All of us have things at the back of our minds that we try to push to the bottom of our hearts. I've never met anyone who would finish the sentence "If I could change one thing about my life, it'd be..." with the word "nothing". For all that there is to be excited and happy about at Christmas time—the parties and the people and the food and the films—that's never the whole story. There are things we feel sad or scared or sorry about, and the presents under the tree are not going to address those. Maybe (if your aunt pointedly gives your uncle a "how to" book on home improvement again) they might even make them worse.

And so what you would most like for Christmas and what you actually get for Christmas are usually two very different things. For me, it will be socks and a book, not the World Cup trip or peace in Afghanistan. And that's ok. After all, you can't wrap up hope, or peace,



or purpose, or confidence, and make a gift of them. No one can deliver those.

Except that someone did. And they did it at Christmas.

#### THE ARRIVAL OF JOY

At the very first Christmas, so the story goes, an angel made an announcement to some very ordinary, nondescript shepherds. This is what the angel said:

*“I bring you good news that will cause great joy.”*

*(Bible book of Luke, chapter 2, verse 10)*

The first Christmas was about something that brought “great joy”. Not polite smiles, like when I unwrapped that dog bowl, or a disappointed sigh, as may well happen this year when my wife opens my very best effort at a thoughtful, useful gift to her. No, the first Christmas was about the arrival of something that really did bring great joy.

This wasn't a joy that relied on everything in life being great; actually, it was a joy that broke into lives that were not going well. Those shepherds, and the other people who experienced the events of the first Christmas, were living in poverty and under oppression. They were subject to Roman rule—and although, when we think of the Romans, we might think of straight roads and warm baths, for 1st-century non-Roman people, their presence mainly meant sharp swords and high taxes. Things must have seemed pretty dark. Yet

still the joy broke through; still these events made a difference. Here was a joy that could change even the darkest of times.

What was the source of this joy? “I bring you good news that will cause great joy,” the angel said, because “you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2 v 12). You’re probably familiar with this story: Mary, Joseph, manger, shepherds, angels, wise men, baby Jesus in the manger. Children act it out every year. But somehow it’s easy to end up enjoying Christmas after Christmas without ever appreciating the story’s depth, its real meaning: that in the middle of the nativity scene lay a baby who brought joy—who came to give us the things that we are all looking for.

The birth of Jesus means this: that at Christmas, and in life, you can have what you would most like: hope, peace, purpose, confidence.

The aim of this book is to help you find out how.

## LIGHT IN THE DARK

In the next four chapters we’re going to look at those four themes, seeing who Jesus was, what he did and what difference that makes to us. First, though, we need to rewind—not 2,000 years to the very first Christmas but even further back in time, to seven centuries before Mary ever fell pregnant.

At that time, the people living in Judah—a little country on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean—

were facing an enemy as bad as, if not worse than, the Romans. Judah was facing catastrophe: invasion from the all-powerful Assyrian army. Try to imagine being in Kabul with the Taliban approaching; that's the kind of fear the people would have felt. The Assyrians were unstoppable—they were already marching through Israel, the country to Judah's north, and Judah would be next. What did the people of Judah need for Christmas? They needed peace. Protection. Rescue.

Into this moment of darkness came a message from a man who claimed to be a spokesman of God—a prophet. This man, Isaiah, was completely realistic about the dark situation Judah faced—but he had not given up hope.

“The people walking in darkness,” he said, “have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (Isaiah 9 v 2).

And how would this light come? “To us a child is born, to us a son is given” (v 6).

Here is Isaiah's solution—and what he claims is God's solution—to the darkness facing Judah. A child. A baby boy.

That's it.

This is like Winston Churchill going on the radio in June 1940—when the British army was retreating from Dunkirk and Britain faced invasion and defeat by Germany—and saying, “Don't worry. Victory is secure. Hope is here. I've heard that a woman is pregnant,

and she will have a son.” This gift that Isaiah was announcing could not have sounded less like what the people needed. They were facing an invasion from a huge, unstoppable army. They were going to be given a tiny baby.

That’s a gift that would surely have prompted a disappointed sigh at best—and more likely it would be a head-in-hands moment. The Assyrians are coming, and the answer is... a little child?!

But then Isaiah told them who this baby boy would be:

*“To us a child is born,  
to us a son is given ...  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9 v 6)*

Isaiah was promising the events of the first Christmas. He was describing who it was that would lie in the manger. Someone was coming who would do far more than bring rescue from an Assyrian invader—though God did also supply that.\* Someone was coming who would give people what they truly wanted, were

\* You can look up how that happened in the Old Testament book of Isaiah 37 v 36-38. The British Museum in London also has some depictions from the period of these invasions.

working for, were dreaming about: hope, peace, purpose, confidence.

#### YOU CAN GET WHAT YOU'D REALLY LIKE

You're probably used to hearing about the baby Jesus at Christmas. But we need to recover the shock of who this baby was and why he was born. The claim of the Bible is that the one whose birth the angel announced and whose identity Isaiah described is still, even all these years later, all anyone needs to ask for.

The Bible is realistic about life: that there are as many things that take joy as give it—that the things we most want out of life often elude us. But the Bible is also very clear about where to find the things we most want and need. They can be found in the baby who was born at the first Christmas: the boy who was the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Everlasting Father, and the Wonderful Counsellor.

I don't expect you to believe that just because I say it. In fact, please don't believe it just because I say it! Instead, I'd love you to spend some time with me, in the next few chapters, looking at some of the evidence for that claim. We're going to focus not on the baby Jesus but the adult Jesus (because, as for all of us, his birth was only the beginning!). We'll see how Jesus grew up to say he was and show he was the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Everlasting Father and the Wonderful Counsellor. And as we do so, you can

consider for yourself who Jesus is. You can see how, if he is who he claims to be, the ultimate Christmas wishlist—the hope, the peace, the purpose and the confidence that we’re all searching for—is wrapped up in him.

Here’s the claim: that in Jesus, you get what you would really like in life—that this Christmas, in a profound and lasting way, what you most need and what you actually get can be the same thing.

Could it be true?