Are you starting to sweat right about now? Are the pressures of that day-when expectations are at their peak-making you feel as if you are stuck in the jaws of a vise? Don't fret; I have a couple of ideas that will help you escape the trap. Actually, let me rephrase that statement using the lingo they would have used at the first Christmas, over 2,000 years ago:

"Behold I bring you good news of great joy!"

The first good news is that you do have a choice about how you will respond the pressure of the holiday season, so choose to relax (and breathe). Resist the temptation to try and meet everyone's Christmas time expectations; it's impossible to do anyway! Instead focus on the joy, love, and anticipation of new beginnings that the season brings. Having covered that important principle, here are some suggestions on simple gifts you can give-all around $10 or less- as expressions of love to those special people in your life.

Fill 'er up- with gourmet coffee with a personal coffee cup. (This was one of my favorite gifts last year for my children's teachers.) This year I think I may go for a box of herbal tea and teacup, for those who like their drinks "unleaded."

Go nutty-A pound of pistachios or mixed nuts is always a welcomed treat.

The time is write-consider purchasing a journal for a young writer and then hand-write a special encouraging note inside. Another option is to purchase pretty stationary and a nice pen.
Say cheese- Place a special photograph in a beautiful frame or purchase a budding photographer two disposable cameras.

Fresh from the oven-Bake something fresh; cake, cookies, bread, and include a recipe card.
Dinner is served-A holiday serving bowl or platter is a great option for your favorite entertainer. Also, you could give her decorative napkins and napkin rings.

Chocolate anyone?-Everyone loves this stuff! Purchase fancy bars and tie them with pretty ribbon. In addition, anything dipped in chocolate makes a wonderful gift. Don't forget the gourmet popcorn-My Aunt Doris' favorite!

Big screen viewing-Movie gift certificates are fun for all ages and can sometimes be purchased at a discount (at Costco).

Gift certificates- from McDonald's, Starbucks, the bookstore, and my favorite-Target! You can never go wrong this way.

Hopefully this list will inspire you to think of other creative and budget-friendly gift ideas. Remember, it's not about the amount you spend-it's about the fact that you cared enough to give.

During church Bible study last week, there was teaching on how Jesus faced many pressures to perform (John, chapter 7). He faced pressure from his (unbelieving) brothers who wanted him to crash a big party and "prove" himself. He faced pressure from the government officials and the intellectuals, who wanted him killed because Jesus was making them look bad.

Finally, he faced pressure from the crowd (Junebug and 'nem), who all argued over their opinions of Jesus and what they thought he should (and shouldn't) be doing. Sound familiar? This is how Jesus responded to all that pressure; he got alone, settled down, and prayed to God for wisdom and proper timing to accomplish His mission. Instead of reacting to the pressures that this busy season can bring, settle down, get focused, and pray for the wisdom to keep Christmas Merry!… Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at low costs. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.

I

Photo in Images: Marcia Humphrey: giftcert10.jpg

Photo courtesy of http://store.digitalscrapbookplace.com/images/gifts/giftcert10.jpg

Style on Dime #79-

Last-minute Christmas gifts-$10 or less

Are you starting to sweat right about now? Are the pressures of *that* Don't fret; I have a couple of ideas that will help you escape the trap. Actually, let me rephrase that statement using the lingo they would have used at the first Christmas, over 2,000 years ago: "
Behold I bring you good news of great joy!
"
day-when expectations are at their peak-making you feel as if you are stuck in the jaws of a vise?

The first good news is that you do have a choice about how you will respond the pressure of the holiday season, so *chooserelax(and breathe).* Resist the temptation to try and meet everyone's Christmas time expectations; it's impossible to do anyway! Instead focus on the joy, love, and anticipation of new beginnings that the season brings. Having covered that important principle, here are some suggestions on simple gifts you can give-all around $10 or less- as expressions of love to those special people in your life. to

Fill 'er up- with gourmet coffee with a personal coffee cup. (This was one of my favorite gifts last year for my children's teachers.) This year I think I may go for a box of herbal tea and teacup, for those who like their drinks "unleaded."

Go nutty-A pound of pistachios or mixed nuts is always a welcomed treat.

The time is write-consider purchasing a journal for a young writer and then hand-write a special encouraging note inside. Another option is to purchase pretty stationary and a nice pen.

Say cheese- Place a special photograph in a beautiful frame or purchase a budding photographer two disposable cameras.

Fresh from the oven-Bake something fresh; cake, cookies, bread, and include a recipe card.

Dinner is served-A holiday serving bowl or platter is a great option for your favorite entertainer. Also, you could give her decorative napkins and napkin rings.

Chocolate anyone?-Everyone loves this stuff! Purchase fancy bars and tie them with pretty ribbon. In addition, anything dipped in chocolate makes a wonderful gift. Don't forget the gourmet popcorn-My Aunt Doris' favorite!

Big screen viewing-Movie gift certificates are fun for all ages and can sometimes be purchased at a discount (at Costco).

Gift certificates- from McDonald's, Starbucks, the bookstore, and my favorite-Target! You can never go wrong this way.

Hopefully this list will inspire you to think of other creative and budget-friendly gift ideas. Remember, it's not about the amount you spend-it's about the fact that you cared enough to give.

During church Bible study last week, there was teaching on how Jesus faced many pressures to perform *(John, chapter 7)*. He faced pressure from his (unbelieving) brothers who wanted him to crash a big party and "prove" himself. He faced pressure from the government officials and the intellectuals, who wanted him killed because Jesus was making them look bad. Finally, he faced pressure from the crowd (Junebug and 'nem), who all argued over their opinions of Jesus and what they thought he should (and shouldn't) be doing. Sound familiar? This is how Jesus responded to all that pressure; he got alone, settled down, and prayed to God for wisdom and proper timing to accomplish His mission. Instead of reacting to the pressures that this busy season can bring, settle down, get focused, and pray for the wisdom to keep Christmas Merry!… Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at low costs. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.

|