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**Dear heavenly Father, we worship You this morning with our tithe and offerings. We pray for the courage to put You first in our lives. In the name of Jesus, amen.**

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**DECEMBER 25, 2021**

## **When God put you first**

Some 2000 years ago, God put you first and gave His only begotten Son so you could live forever. The birth of Jesus is a reminder that it was God who put you first, before you even knew He existed.

The gospel story is NOT the story of you loving God so that God can take you to a better place. It is no wonder many of us have struggled to believe God truly loves us.

The gospel story is the story of God loving you even before you were born. It's the story of God putting YOU first. It's the unbelievable story of the ruler of the universe giving up heaven to suffer on your behalf so you can have eternal life. The gospel story is a story of a Father: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Jesus describes the church as His bride. For all of the failures of our church to fulfill the mission God has given us, the church is still Jesus' bride and we are called to love the church as Jesus does. We must be careful how we treat the church, always remembering how much love Jesus has for the church.

Jesus will always supply the resources needed

by His bride to fulfill her mission. The interesting thing is how Jesus does this. He supplies the church by putting the resources into your bank account and invites you to put God first by passing on the resources to the church.

Two things are clear: 1) if the church doesn't have enough resources, it may be possible it is because some of us are keeping her resources to ourselves; and 2) it explains why Jesus continues to send so many resources to those who are faithful in passing these resources to His bride.

You are also invited to realise that you are the church. Another analogy is that we are the body of Christ and therefore, when we use our best talents, we are building the body of Christ. This means Christ will interact with your community through you.

When Jesus was born some 2000 years ago, He declared to the universe that He was putting you first. Today God is pleading with you to put Him first. He cannot wait to bless you beyond your wildest dreams.

*For this coming year, His love compels us to put His kingdom first in our lives. As the deacons collect the tithe and offerings, we are challenged to put God first.*