

activated

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.



CHRISTMAS RUSH, OR CHRISTMAS REASON?

"Please let me stop
and look at Jesus!"

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

Who is it for, anyway?

WRAPPED IN MEANING

Behind those familiar
symbols

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personally speaking



Christmas is different things to different people.

For some people it's the moneymaking opportunity of the year; for others it's an inescapable financial disaster—a sinkhole of overspending that will take them months to climb out of.

For some it's a time to enjoy family and friends, a time to love and be loved; for others it's the loneliest time of the year.

For some it's the warmth and security of hearth and home; for others it's a painfully stark reminder of all they don't have and probably never will.

For some it's cause for deep reflection; for others an occasion to party and forget it all.

For some it's a chance to splurge on gifts for loved ones and to receive in kind; for others it's a chance to give of themselves to needy strangers, expecting nothing in return.

For some it's beautiful lights and colorful decorations—a brief once-a-year escape into a world where all is merry and all is right; for others it's hope in the promise that one day all wrongs will be made right and there will truly be "peace on Earth, goodwill toward men."

For some it's a jolly old man in a red suit and long white beard, saying "Ho, ho, ho!" and making children's wishes come true; for others it's a baby boy in a manger who will make God's wish come true.

For us at *Activated*, Christmas is an opportunity to join millions around the world in celebrating Jesus' birth and sharing His love with others.

We hope that this issue of *Activated* will help make this Christmas your happiest and most meaningful yet. May God bless you and make you a blessing this Christmas season and throughout the New Year.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Phillips".

Keith Phillips
For the *Activated* family

Touched by Love

ON CHRISTMAS EVE

FROM JOANNA, BRAZIL

Solange was one of several dozen patients I met while caroling with friends in a hospital one Christmas Eve. Each patient was suffering and hoped for a little love and comfort, but young Solange—in bandages and casts from head to toe—was special. As we sang for her, she began to cry. Soon she was sobbing almost uncontrollably.

“Jesus loves and cares for you,” I reassured her.

Then Solange explained that she and her family had been in a car accident. Her father, mother, and sister were all killed. She had lost her family. Solange had been in a coma for three days, but had survived against all odds.

I prayed with her to receive Jesus as her Savior, and gave her two Christmas posters I’d brought with me—one with a text on the back about Heaven, and the other with a text about Jesus and His great personal love for each of us. I also prayed for her healing and promised to visit her again.

“Joanna,” she said, “my heart is touched because you are here, because you are concerned for me, a total stranger, and because you would spend your Christmas Eve with me.”

Solange remained in the hospital for three more months, and I visited her as often as I could. Each time I took her one of The Family’s inspirational cassette tapes such as *Fear Not* or *How to Win*, or read to her from the Bible to encourage her and strengthen her faith. By the time Solange

was released from the hospital, the miracle that began in her life on Christmas Eve was complete; she was happy, whole, and recovering from her emotional trauma.

Christmas is a time for forgiving

A teenager who had run away from home is returning on Christmas Eve by train. He has written ahead to tell his parents he wants to come back, but he isn’t sure that he will be welcomed. The train track runs right behind the family’s farm, so he has asked his father to tie a red cloth on the big elm at the back of the property to signal him if he’s welcome.

When he is yet a few miles away, the boy shares his anxiety with an older passenger sitting next to him. The man says he knows the teenager will be as welcome as another young man who ran off one time. Then he tells him Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32).

Sure enough, when the train reaches the old homestead, the father’s red signal is out—but instead of one signal, there were dozens of red flags waving in the wind, one from every conceivable branch, shouting the news to a runaway boy that all was forgiven at Christmas.

The only blind person at Christmastime is he who has not Christmas in his heart.

—HELEN KELLER



Christmas Rush, or Christmas Reason?

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG

I was standing in the doorway of a department store a few Christmases ago, enjoying a lovely nativity scene in a store window, when a mother and her little girl came hurrying by. Catching a glimpse of the beautiful scene, the child grabbed her mother's hand and exclaimed, "Mama! Mama! Please let me stop for a minute and look at Jesus!" But her mother replied wearily that they weren't even half through with their shopping list and didn't have time to stop—and walked on, dragging her disappointed daughter behind her.

The child's words rang in my heart for a long time after that. *Please let me stop for a minute and look at Jesus.* I thought of all the minutes that had sped by me that busy Christmas in the mad rush of life that is accelerated at the height of the shopping season. How many minutes had I spent shopping and buying presents and preparing decorations and food in the great wind-up to Christmas, and how many had I spent with the One whose birth and life is the true meaning of this celebrative season?

Jesus is always so very close to us. He is "at our right hand" and "closer than a brother" (Psalm 16:8; Proverbs 18:24). He is within speaking distance. His birth is the essence of Christmas. His gifts to all—peace, love, and joy of heart—are the essential magic of Christmas. With arms outstretched He holds out these gifts to us and says, "Come to Me. I will give you rest. Learn from Me, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28–30). But these we will never receive if we forge on, endless shopping and to-do lists in hand, too busy to stop and even notice He's right there.

Like the old saying, "Dew never falls on a stormy night," we rarely experience the sweetness and joy of time spent with Jesus while in an anxious and feverish rush of accomplishment. But the dew of Heaven and the blessings of Christmas fall peacefully on our hearts and lives when we stop

for a moment to get quiet and remember Him. To go on without Him is forfeiting the only real, lasting joy and perfect love that can be experienced in this life and shared forever.

Why don't we stop and enjoy—really enjoy—what Christmas means? Cut down our task lists. Enjoy the beauty. There are so many wonderful things about Christmas and so many beautiful things to see. It would be a shame to miss it all, wrapping this and wrapping that, rushing for this last thing and that, cooking and preparing so much for a feast, cluttering our Christmas with so many unnecessary things. And should we not stop to enjoy anything of life until after Christmas, the fury with which we proceed will send us reeling into the New Year sighing, "I just survived Christmas!"

Jesus came to bless our lives. That is why we have Christmas. He said He came to bring us life, and that we might have it more abundantly (John 10:10). And the apostle Paul tells us, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Peace and life in all their

fullness need not elude us. They are ours to enjoy this Christmas if we'll give Jesus a chance in our lives and a place in our hearts.

Let me take a minute with Jesus. The true presence of Christmas is found with Him. Let the celebration of His birth touch my heart in a new way this year. Let me learn more about the gifts He gave me so long ago on Christmas. Let me be a part of Christmas itself by being more like Him. Let me stop and look at Jesus.

Dear Jesus, I want each day that comes
To share some part with You,
Where I can sit, receive Your peace,
And hear You speak to me.

A place where I can turn aside
And leave the cares of life,
Where I can get the strength I need
To banish storm and strife.

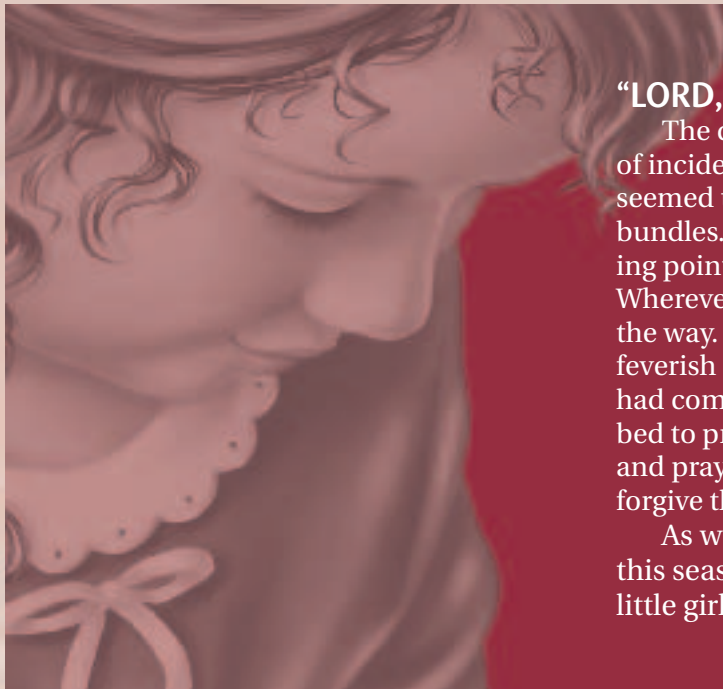
A quiet, serene, and trusting place
Where You alone can give
The very blessing that I need—
Here would I rest and live. ★

"LORD, FORGIVE!"

The day before Christmas had been full of incidents, some of them unpleasant. Father seemed to be burdened with worries as well as bundles. Mother's anxiety had reached the breaking point on many occasions throughout the day. Wherever the little girl went, she seemed to be in the way. Finally she was hustled off to bed. The feverish excitement of the Christmas planning had completely unnerved her. As she knelt by her bed to pray the Lord's Prayer, she got all mixed up and prayed, "Forgive us our Christmases, as we forgive those who Christmas against us."

As we watch the tense, nervous shoppers this season, we might feel like praying as the little girl did, "Forgive us our Christmases."

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN



“Silent night, holy night!”

What beautiful words to a beautiful song, written so long ago—a song that so perfectly captures the calm, serenity, and peace of that wonderful first Christmas night.

Nine-year-old Joan lay on her bed, listening to the Christmas carols that played downstairs where her mom, Angela Jenson, was fixing their Christmas Eve meal. Joan smiled as she thought of how her mom loved to listen to those old Christmas carols over and over again. Her favorite, “Silent Night,” seemed to be playing for the hundredth time now. Her mom never tired of hearing it.

Joan was an only child and lived alone with her mother in a quiet suburban neighborhood. She had spent most of the day inside the house. Now it was mid-afternoon and she was restless. She needed to do something outside. There would be plenty of time with her mom and relatives during the Christmas celebrations, but now she felt like finding some friends to be with.

One friend’s house was just down the street, on the other side—so off Joan went. She had been taught to be careful when crossing the street, and normally she was. This time, however, Joan’s mind was busy with thoughts of the games she and her friend would play and things they would do before dark. Without stopping at the curb or glancing to see if there was any traffic, Joan ran into the street.

There was a sudden screeching of tires and an awful thud—and then the sound of a car roaring off. Angela heard it all from her kitchen. Her whole world hushed. Somehow she knew what had happened. She dropped her cooking and ran out the door. There, to her horror, Joan lay motionless in the street.

Anguish flooded Angela’s heart and mind. The peace and calm she had felt only moments before had been replaced with terrible pain. She raced to her daughter’s side.



SILENT NIGHT

BY GEORGE GREY

Other doors opened and neighbors came out of their houses to see what had happened.

“Quick!” Angela shouted, her voice quivering. “Call an ambulance. My girl is hurt!”

Kneeling over her daughter, Angela brushed the hair from Joan’s face. Joan was unconscious, but breathing. *Thank God!* she thought, *She’s alive. There’s hope.* Then came a silent prayer. *Oh, God! Please save my little daughter! Please don’t let her die!*

At the hospital the doctors found that Joan had suffered a severe concussion and her arm had been broken. Considering the force of the impact, the doctors said it was a miracle that it hadn’t been worse.

Joan’s condition was stable, but hours passed and Joan didn’t regain consciousness.

Late into the night, Angela sat at her daughter’s bedside and held her hand. Christmas seemed impossible now, yet that old familiar strain ran through her mind. *Silent night, holy night ...* Angela buried her face in her hands. *Oh, dear God,* she prayed, *will this be my silent night? Will Joan stay silent and still? Is she going to die?* This was not the kind of silence she had ever imagined would befall her at Christmas. She felt so completely alone.

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright. The words first echoed through her mind, and then she began to sing them softly.

Silent night, holy night.
All is calm; all is bright
'Round yon virgin, mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Oh, God!
Please save my little
daughter! Please
don't let her die!



In the stillness of that hospital room, Angela began to feel a serenity that she had never experienced before. Then one word came clearly to mind: *Pray.*

There was nothing else she could do and no one else to turn to, so Angela bared her soul to God in prayer for her daughter.

The peace that she had felt before she prayed remained with her throughout the night. Just as Angela watched over her daughter, she knew that God was there in that room, watching over both of them as He had watched over His newborn Son on this night long ago. Surely He understood a parent’s love. Surely He was concerned and would answer her prayer.

Christmas morning came softly as the first rays of sunlight pierced the room. “Mommy? Mommy, is that you?”

Angela raised her weary head. She had fallen asleep in her chair where she had been praying.

“Joan, are you all right?”

“Yes, Mommy, but my head hurts.”

Angela reached over and kissed her dear daughter. Tears of joy began streaming down her face, as she whispered thanks to the One who had stayed by their side through the night. “Thank You! Thank You for watching over us, and for answering my prayer!” Her daughter was back! That was all she could have wished for this Christmas.

But there was more to be thankful for. Her favorite Christmas carol had taken on a new meaning, for Angela had seen the power of prayer and experienced the perfect peace that trusting God can bring. ★



The Birthday Party

By TED LITTLE

D

eariest Loretta,

Hello, dear friend. Well, as you know, it's almost time for My birthday again. Last year they had a real big party for Me, and it seems like they will again this year. Everyone has been shopping and preparing for it for months now, and there have been announcements and advertisements almost every day about how soon it's coming. It's nice to know that at least one time each year some people are thinking about Me a little.

Many years ago, when people first started celebrating My birthday, they seemed to realize and appreciate how much I had done for them. Today it seems that most people hardly know what My birthday is all about. Nevertheless, I enjoy seeing people getting together and having a good time, and I'm happy about how much fun it is for the little children. Just the same, it seems that most folks are missing the point of it all.

Like last year, for example: When My birthday came around, they threw a big party, but I wasn't even invited! Can you believe that? I was supposed to be the guest of honor, and they forgot all about Me. Here they had begun preparing for the festivities two months in advance, but when the big day came, I was left out in the cold. To be honest, it's happened so many times in recent years that I wasn't even surprised.

Even though I wasn't invited, I slipped in quietly and stood off to the side, unnoticed. Everyone was drinking, laughing, and having a merry time, when all of a sudden, in came this fat old fellow in a bright red suit and a phony white beard, shouting, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" He looked like he'd had more than enough to drink, but

he somehow managed to weave his way across the floor while everyone cheered. When he collapsed into a big armchair, all of the children ran over to him and yelled, "Santa! Santa!" I mean, you would have thought that the whole holiday was in *his* honor!

Finally I just had to leave. I walked out the door, and no one even noticed that I'd gone. I could hardly remember the last time I'd felt so low. Maybe you think I don't cry, Loretta, but I did that night.

That's why I was so touched when I came by your house that evening, and you and your little family took Me in and treated Me royally. I was deeply moved when you all sang "Happy Birthday" to Me. It had been such a long time since anyone had thought to do that. I treasure friends like you! It's comforting to know that there are a few other folks around who also remember Me on My birthday—sweet folks like you who are close to Me and celebrate My birthday with a nice time and

a simple meal together. I never miss being with them on that day.

That little manger scene you had put up in the corner of your living room was very nice. I appreciate it when people commemorate My birth like that. But did you know that in some countries, it's now against the law to put manger scenes in parks or schools or other public places? And I'm talking about supposedly Christian countries! What are things coming to?

Another thing that amazes Me is how, on My birthday, most people give gifts only to each other, instead of to Me. Let Me ask you, wouldn't you find it odd if, when your birthday came along, all your friends decided to celebrate it by giving presents only to each other and not to you?

Someone once told Me, "Well, it's because You're not here physically, so how can we give You presents?" My answer to that one was, "Then give gifts of food and clothing to the poor. Go visit the lonely. Help those who need it. Any gift you give to your needy fellow man, I'll consider a gift to Me personally."

Well, sad to say, things are getting worse. Now a lot of people go so far as to leave My name out of My birthday greeting. They replace My name with an "X."—X-mas! What an insult! What more could they do to push Me out of the picture on My own birthday?

Well, I've got a surprise for them—or rather for those of you who love Me and appreciate all I've done for you. I'm going to let you in on a little secret, Loretta. This is something I've been planning for quite a while, and I think it's just about time. I'm going to hold My own party! How about that? It's going to be the biggest, most fantastic feast you could possibly imagine. There will be room for everyone who wants to come, and I know you will, Loretta. I'm sending out the invitations now, and when everything's ready and the time is right, I'm going to spring it as a big surprise!

Please let Me know right away if you'd like to come, and I'll reserve you a place and write your name in large gold letters in My big guest book.

Much love, Jesus

Do you know the real meaning of Christmas? The Bible tells us, "God so loved the world [and that includes you] that He gave His only Son [Jesus], that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God loves you so much that He sent His own Son, Jesus, into the world on the very first Christmas, so He could eventually die on the cross and take the punishment for every wrong you have ever done.

Have you received God's great Christmas gift to you—Jesus and all that comes with Him: forgiveness, unfailing love, everlasting life, and much, much more? Give your heart to Jesus, and He will give His heart, love, joy, and peace to you. Then you will be His forever, and you will have a place reserved at the great party He's planning in Heaven. Don't miss it! ★





God grant you the
light of Christmas,
which is faith; the
warmth of Christmas,
which is love; the
radiance of Christmas,
which is purity; the
righteousness of Christmas,
which is justice; the
belief of Christmas,
which is truth; the
all of Christmas,
which is Christ.
—WILDA ENGLISH

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY



"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" was written on December 25, 1863, when the American Civil War was at its height. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882), the famous American poet, was saddened by the horrors of this conflict, for "hate seemed overstrong at the moment." His son, who was serving as a lieutenant in the Union Army at the time, had just been wounded.

When Longfellow heard the Christmas bells ringing, he came to the realization, from the depths of his despair, that "God is not dead, nor doth He sleep." He believed that God was powerful enough to overcome the world's strife, and that one day He would bring peace and good will to earth.

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play
And mild and sweet the words repeat,
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought how as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had roll'd along th' unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bow'd my head:
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men."

'Til ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men! ★

The true meaning of Christmas

John 3:16
1 John 4:9

How to live Christmas every day

Matthew 10:8
Matthew 25:34–40
Mark 10:42–45
Luke 10:25–37
Philippians 2:3–8
1 John 3:16–18

Feeding Reading

THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS



For unto us a Child is born,
unto us a Son is given; and
the government will be upon
His shoulder. And His name will
be called wonderful, Counselor,
Mighty God, everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.

—ISAIAH 9:6

He had no wheat fields or
fisheries, but he could feed 5000
people and have bread and fish
to spare.

He walked on no beautiful
carpets, but He walked on water.

Yet no miracle He performed
is so wonderful or inexplicable as
His love for you and me.

—ADAPTED

Jesus
renounced His citi-
zenship in
Heaven, and
though He
was rich, for
our sakes He
became
poor, that
we
through
His pov-
erty might
become
rich. Jesus
not only had

to come down amongst us, but
He had to be one of us! He had to
become a member of the human
community.

He came as a meek and
quiet, weak and helpless baby. He
not only adapted Himself to our
bodily form, but also conformed
to the human ways of life. He
was human. He got tired. He got
hungry. He got weary. He was
subject to all these things, even

as we are, yet without sin, that He
might have compassion upon us,
know how we feel, know when
we're footsore and weary, know
when we've had enough.

God sent Jesus to become a
human being in order that He
might better reach us with His
love, communicate with us on the
lowly level of our own human
understanding, and have more
mercy and patience with us than
God Himself. Think of that!

"He knows our frame; He
remembers that we are dust"
(Psalm 103:14), having worn that
frame Himself, suffering in it, and
dying in it for our sakes. He came
down here to our level that He
might take us with Him back up
to His. What a miracle, all for our
sakes!

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

We thank You, Jesus, that You
were born on this earth to live
here for us and to die for us.
You lived here like us and suf-
fered through all the things that
we have to go through, yet You
never wavered in faith.

We thank You for the great-
est gift of all, Yourself. We thank
You for all that went into giving
us salvation and eternal life.
Amen. ★



Jesus Christ was born in the
meanest of circumstances, but
the air above was filled with the
hallelujahs of the heavenly hosts.

His lodging was a cattle pen,
but a star drew distinguished
visitants from afar to pay Him
homage.

His birth was contrary to the
laws of life. His death was con-
trary to the laws of death.



By CARI HARROP

Parenting from the Heart

Simple Joys That Warm Christmas

I was thinking about my mom on her birthday, and realized that there was something very special about my childhood—the times we spent together. More specifically, I was thinking about the Christmases we had shared. The thing that made each memory special wasn't the number or value of the gifts we received or the Christmas parties we attended. Rather, it was the simple things.

First there was the Christmas that we made an extra effort to do things together as a family, when we made a manger scene in our living room out of an old board topped with miniature pine trees and figurines that we made and dressed ourselves.

The cold little house we lived in another year was warmed by a cassette tape of Christmas carols—a first for us children—and the joy of finding oranges in the stockings we hung out, and nuts and raisins wrapped in foil. That year we also had a Christmas tree with homemade ornaments depicting the gifts of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22–23, KJV).

Then there was the Christmas when I was smaller still. We strung popcorn and hung it on

the tree. There was hardly any left by the end of December, for a certain little girl nibbled away whenever no one was looking.

There was also the Christmas when I was nine, when we six kids awoke to a surprise—a line of white shoe boxes, each clearly marked with our names and each containing something special that we needed or could play with—skipping ropes, socks, etc. What treats those were for us children of full-time Christian volunteers!

Thinking about those special occasions caused me to want to give my own two children that same love, excitement, and warmth this Christmas. I want them to have happy memories to look back on. That's when I realized what it was that made those moments so special: It was my parents' love and the time they gave us, which demonstrated that love. It was also our parents' faith in Jesus and the Word that gave us what we needed—His love and salvation and a purpose in life—reaching and winning others with the Lord's love.

No, we didn't have a lot, but we had the Lord and each other—and that's what made those the happiest Christmases I can imagine. ★

Wrapped in Meaning



A Candymaker's Message ...

It is said that the first Christmas candy cane was made by a candymaker in the state of Indiana, USA, who wanted to make a candy that would represent God's love to us. In that simple shape, he incorporated several symbols for the birth, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ.

He began with a stick of pure white, hard candy—white to symbolize the virgin birth and the sinless nature of Jesus, and hard to symbolize the firmness of faith and the rock-solid promises of God.

The candymaker made the candy in the form of a "J" to represent the name of Jesus, who came to earth as our Savior. It could also represent the staff of the Good Shepherd, with which Jesus reaches down into the ditches of the world to lift out the stray sheep and fallen lambs.

The candymaker then stained the cane with four red stripes. First he added three small stripes to represent the stripes from the whipping that Jesus received before He was crucified—His suffering for the healing of our bodies. The single large red stripe was for the blood shed by Him on the cross so that we could have the promise of eternal life.

The candy became known as the candy cane—a familiar decoration seen at Christmastime, though few understand its intended symbolism. For us it can serve as a reminder of the wonder of Jesus coming down at Christmas and His great love that remains the ultimate and dominant positive force in the universe today.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Let's Never Lose the True Meaning of Christmas ...

The Christmas tree can be more than mere decoration: It can be a witness to others, symbolizing the beauty of life and living. In wintertime the evergreen, even in the midst of death and decay, is a symbol of everlasting life. In spite of the hardships of winter, the evergreens survive and stay beautiful and green all winter long—just like Jesus!

So make the tree a reminder of Jesus, Son of the eternal God of Heaven, and a reminder of our everlasting evergreen eternal life and the other gifts He hangs on us continually. Let's never lose the true meaning of Christmas, or let the symbolism of the tree and the genuine spirit of Christmas become drowned in all the confusion of this world and its worldliness. Let's glorify the *Lord* at Christmastime!

—DAVID BRANDT BERG



Occasion to Love

For many of us, since we were young children, Christmas has always been a special time for celebrating Jesus' birth, giving and receiving gifts, and spending time with family and close friends. But Christmas is a time not only to enjoy these blessings ourselves. It is also the greatest opportunity of the year to tell the world about our precious Savior. It is an occasion when people desire to hear more about the meaning of Christmas and the spiritual significance of this day that much of the world celebrates. Even in cultures that don't include Christmas, people are eager to learn the true meaning of it.

We have a chance to give the very best gifts this Christmas, not only to the ones we know best and hold dear, but also to neighbors and strangers who share our world. There are those around us whose hearts are weary, who cry out for a comforter; those whose lives are sin-sick and sorrowful, who yearn for a Savior. They seek a rescuer;

they weep inside for a deliverer. They are overwhelmed by fear and uncertainty, filled with despair and hopelessness, laden with burdens of bitterness and guilt, imprisoned in emptiness, plagued by pain and discouragement, and beset by problems too big for them to solve. Many have no goals, no meaning in their lives.

Jesus loves them and wants to take them in His arms. But He who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving must have *your* help! You are His eyes that can see their need and love them, His ears that can hear and respond to their cry, His voice that can comfort them, His tears that can move them, His arms that can embrace them.

Will you do your best to help them? Will you give even when it hurts? Jesus did. He stepped outside the most wonderful place that has ever been created to come here to earth to endure discomfort and humiliation and mocking and pain, so that He could save us. Will you, too, step outside the walls of your warm and happy home to endure



BY MARIA DAVID

He stepped outside
the most wonderful
place that
has ever
been created
to come here
to earth

the discomfort, the humbling, the weariness, sometimes even skepticism and scoffing, to try to share Jesus' love with the hungry?

You can make a difference this Christmas. Even the humblest attempt to share the little you may have will shine as a very bright light in someone's life. Your love will shine even brighter this year because the world has gotten darker, and your little "candle" will be seen and reflected in the lives of many as a ray of hope and faith to penetrate despair and fear.

Reach out to others. Tell them how Jesus came to earth to love them, how He died to save them, and how He rose again to deliver them into a wonderful new world that they can experience right now on earth and also enjoy forever in Heaven. Proclaim that we celebrate the birthday of a living Savior, not a dead hero—a living Savior, who was born on earth that He might die in order to rise again to rescue us from the evil kingdom of sin and death and fear and loneliness.

Be Jesus' hands.
Be His feet.
Be His eyes.
Be His lips.

As His Father sent Him, so He sends us. Be Jesus' hands. Be His feet. Be His eyes. Be His lips. Bind up the brokenhearted; comfort those that mourn; free the captives; feed the hungry with food that will last them forever; raise those who are dead in trespasses and sins; heal the sick in body and spirit; welcome the rejected, the alienated, the ostracized; give new sight to the blind by giving them Jesus, the Light of the World. Preach the Gospel to the poor; loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free. Give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Freely ye have received, freely give (Mathew 10:8; 11:5; John 20:21; Isaiah 58:6; 61:1,3).

Let's not stop with Christmas! Let's keep sharing and giving and loving just as much throughout the year to come. Let's make each day a celebration of Jesus' birth, His death, and His resurrection that promises new life for all! ★

From Jesus with Love

Love—this is My special gift for you. Love that knows no boundaries. Love that does not judge you by the color of your skin, the way you look, or how you speak. Love that gives. Love that shares. Love that cares.

Love that is alive, vibrant, warm, and kind. Love that is unconditional and forever.

Love that is patient in a world of intolerance. Love that is understanding when others fail to see into your heart. Love that is kind and tender when all else around you seems cold and hard. Love that comforts you in your sorrow, that consoles you when you're lonely, that gives you a helping hand when you're down. Love that is full of happiness and laughter. Love that brings peace in the midst of stormy weather. Love that always finds a way.

My love is always there for you—any place, any time, day or night. My love will descend to any depth to save, go any length to rescue. It knows no stopping place; it knows no limit in giving. I give you My love, infinite and true.

My love brings peace of mind when you are confused, rest when you are weary, and strength when you feel you cannot go on. My love will calm your fears and give you courage in the face of despair. My love can heal when your body is broken; it can soothe your heartaches and pain. My love will ease your mind when it is troubled and weary; it will melt away tension, worry, and strain.

My love is My Christmas gift for you.
It's always been there for you. Will
you take it now?

—Jesus

Is it possible that Jesus could love you and care about you this much? Would you like to find out? All you have to do is give Jesus a chance. Just try Him and see. Hold open your heart and let Him place His gift of love there. Just say, "I receive You, Jesus. I want Your gift of love and a life that is full and free." It's just that simple. He'll do the rest. He loves you! Merry Christmas!