



John 3:16: (NASB) For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.



When we talk about the "spirit" of something, we are trying to describe what that something was intended to result in or look like. Let's take the spirit of a law. Whatever that law may be interpreted as meaning, or however it might be applied, needs to be checked against what the law was actually intended to allow. It is far too easy to have a personal agenda and take the words of that law and rationalize them into fitting what we want them to mean. This is an unfortunate result of selfish thinking. The same is true with Christmas. The lights, movies, decorations, gifts, fanfare and food all tend to take away from the simplicity of

the true spirit of Christmas. What is the true intention of the Christmas holiday? How do we pay our highest respect to it?



The true spirit of Christmas is expressed in **GIVING**. Based in love, giving is at the core of Christmas.

This spirit of Christmas giving is ancient and was established thousands of years before the nativity scene. It is expressed in countless Old Testament prophecies of the coming of Messiah. As a matter of fact, this spirit of giving was shown to be in the plan of God before the foundation of the world. It was expressed in the first events of human history and in the last book of the Bible.

#### This one prophecy gives us a sense of the magnitude of this spirit of giving:

<u>Isaiah 9:6-7</u>: (KJV) <sup>6</sup>For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup>Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Talk about giving! This shows God giving His only begotten son to the world. It also shows Jesus' part in giving of himself: <a href="Isaiah 6:8">Isaiah 6:8</a>: (NASB) ...here am I. Send me!

The intent of Christmas giving is not wrapped up in a package. It is a gift from heaven, prophesied long ago.

This gift was given because the very nature of God is to love and to give:



John 3:16: (NASB) For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

#### Our expressions of giving can be built directly upon the foundation of what we have been given:

Matthew 10:5-8: (NASB) 5These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup>And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. 8Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.



## How do we embrace the giving and receiving Practical! How do we embrace the giving and received of this season with a true Christmas spirit?

When we give to others, it shows them we remember, appreciate and love them. It also says, "Thank you" and that we value them in our lives. They are valuable in God's eyes.

Let's look inward to understand what we need to give and what we should be receiving. Reviewing the Christian Questions Archives on our website, ChristianQuestions.com, we note many of the podcast episodes fit into the categories of either "giving" or "receiving."

Taking to heart all of the principles expressed last year will help us embrace giving and receiving in the proper way. What better gift can we give others than to preach the gospel, as described in Episode 1080. Jesus Died For You -Are You Dying For Him? (Episode 1095) On the receiving end, how are we receiving criticism to make us better? (Episode 1102) How do we receive the blessings of fatherhood? (Episode 1078) Motherhood? (Episode 1073) What benefit do WE get out of Jesus' final prayers? (Episode 1070)

Every CQ episode is a gift for each listener that we pray brings blessings and positive change. We can "gift" each episode by forwarding the audio to family and friends who we think would benefit from that particular topic.

Lessons from CQ 2019 Archives to Help with Proper Giving and Receiving (Not all inclusive)	
GIVING	RECEIVING
#1063: Is This the Moment You Were Created For? (Part II)	#1060: What Does a Marriage Need to Be Strong?
#1080: Preach the Gospel! What Does That Mean?	#1067: Do Christians Need Hope in Their Lives?
#1093: Do Our Prayers Change God's Mind?	#1066: Do I Seek God's Protection or His Permission?
#1095: Jesus Died For You! Are You Dying For Him?	#1070: What Can We Learn From Jesus' Final Prayers?
#1101: How Can We Be Thankful When Life is So Hard?	#1073: Is Motherhood Still Vital?
Christian Questions Think about the Bible like you never have before	#1078: Is Fatherhood Still Vital?
	#1082: How Do I Live a Life of Repentance?
	#1102: How Can Criticism Help Us Grow?

The entire gospel is about giving and receiving.



God brought the Messiah into the world as a baby - He did not necessarily have to do it that way. Jesus was a vulnerable, defenseless baby, born to peasants. Those around him needed to give support to him.

Christmas giving is not about the box, the wrapping, the sales or the newest, fanciest or one with the most glitter. It is about what comes deeply from the heart, as God gave to us from His heart.



### The Blessings of Giving & Receiving

Especially in this season, let us strive to have our giving and receiving model the very highest standard of God's unspeakable gift.

Already we can see how deep and profound, and yet how simple, giving with the spirit of Christmas can be.

Giving and receiving is a good basis to begin talking about the true Christmas spirit. What is next?

Often our conversations about Christmas circle around gifts and family. Now that we have begun to see the power of giving and receiving blossom, we should also consider looking at the deep staying power of the family unit. The family represents a potent source of encouragement and love.



The true spirit of Christmas is expressed in **FAMILY**. Family is one of the objects of Christmas giving.

When we think of the birth of Jesus, we think of that small family unit, journeying to Bethlehem. How often do we consider the loyalty of Joseph and Mary to God and to each other?

<u>Luke 2:1-7</u>: (NASB) ¹Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. ²This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. ⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. ⁶While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

This family was called upon to deal with unexpected supernatural events to bring the Messiah into the world. They were called upon because of their *faith* and loyalty to God and to each other. They were used by God to provide the Messiah a nurturing environment in which to grow up. For more on the relationship of Joseph and Mary, please search our archives for Episode 1053: How Do You Show Your Joy to the World?



#### Do you have any special family traditions around Christmas?



Our tradition is to have a Christmas dinner in December at our home for family and church friends. Everyone brings a wrapped ornament. Attached to each box is a few Scriptures to give a clue as to what is inside. After dinner, we read the clues and try to guess what is in the boxes. There is a lot of laughter and creativity. There is a sweet fellowship.



When our (now grown) kids were still in the house, we had the "Cry Fest" on Christmas Eve with their cousins and the rest of our family. We would sit by candlelight and everyone took a turn and talked about their past year. Inevitably people would start crying because they would be very honest and personal. It was part of the growing up process.

Family is not just about those who are physically related to us or just fellow Christians. It is also about others - the people we might work with, those who are our neighbors or those we merely know.

### (Part one), The Old Shoemaker (Part one), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

Long ago, there lived an old shoemaker named Martin. Martin lived alone in his humble shop, but his work was of the finest quality and he was always honest with his customers. He tried to live the way the Savior taught. One night as he was sleeping he heard a voice, "Martin, Martin, look tomorrow on the street where I am coming." Martin awoke unsure if he had been dreaming. That morning he set to work as usual but could not help but look steadfastly out the window onto the street, just in case his beloved Savior appeared. As he was watching, Martin noticed an old soldier out in the freezing cold, shoveling snow. Martin invited him into his shop and gave him something warm to drink. Later in the day, Martin noticed a young mother cradling a small child in her arms. She had no coat. Martin insisted she come in and warm herself by the fire. He learned that the day before she had sold her shawl to buy food. After she had eaten, the old cobbler gave her some coins and gave her his own coat. In the evening, an old woman who was selling some apples appeared, and a hungry little boy came along and tried to steal an apple, but the woman grabbed him and threatened to take him to the police. Martin rushed out into the street and begged her to let the boy go. Martin paid for the apple himself and gave it to the boy who promised to not steal again.

<u>Galatians 6:9-10</u>: (NASB) <sup>9</sup>Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. <sup>10</sup>So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

### The Old Shoemaker (Part two), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

• Martin returned to his shop and kept working. When night came Martin put his tools away, disappointed that he had waited all day and his Savior had not come. As he lit the candle however, a voice whispered to him, "Martin, Martin, did you not recognize me?" From the dim corner of his shop, the old solider, the mother and her child, the boy and the old woman, stepped into the light. "It is I," they whispered. And then the old cobbler understood. He pulled out his well-worn Scriptures and read these words: "For I was an



hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: (Matthew 25:35) ...Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40) And then Martin knew his dream had been real after all, and the Savior truly had visited him that day.

#### The whole point of giving is to focus on those who we are willing and privileged to give to:

Galatians 6:2-5: (NASB) <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup>But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. <sup>5</sup>For each one will bear his own load.



How do we see and respond to our family, our brotherhood and our extended human family with the highest and most godly spirit of Christmas?

> We respond by showing them kindness and letting our lights shine. We do this by knowing or studying them to see what their needs are and how we may be a help and a blessing to them. If we do not truly know them, we will not know how to be a blessing.

> (Source: Readers Digest, submitted by mariloulebeld) When I was six years old or so I received an orange from my great-grandmother. I didn't understand why someone had given me fruit for Christmas, until I learned many years later that this was my great-grandma's favorite gift when she was a kid in the 1910s. It was her tradition and her way to remind us that small things could make us happy.

> Look inward. If we can simplify our lives by cutting down on our wants and trying to organize our time, it will leave us with more time to be perceptive to the needs of others. If we are crazy stressed-out, we cannot calm someone else down. If we find nothing to be cheerful about, we will bring others down. We want to be a positive reflection of God and Jesus. Our hearts should be absorbed in the work of God.

> The better we are, the more use we can be. As Christians, we should be the MOST polite, the MOST generous, the kindest people in the world, because we should have the fruit of the Spirit proceeding out of us.

The less frenzied we allow ourselves to become in the commercialized perspective, it will allow us to get back to the true intention of the story of the birth of Jesus. We see the incredible depth and value of the human family for whom Jesus gave his life.



### The Blessings of Family

God's own loyalty to His human family is revealed in Jesus.

Let us apply this spirit of God's creation to our families by expressing our highest and most godly loyalty.

Family is a vital part of God's plan for us. No wonder God calls us His children and Jesus calls us his brothers.



# Giving in love is the foundation of the Christmas spirit and family is the object. What is the result?

Here is where the real lessons begin to come clear and the true spirit, the true intention of Christmas begins to sink in. Because God created us as emotional beings, we have a strong capacity for learning and change when our hearts are engaged in what we do. Pure joy in an experience is a great teacher.



The true spirit of Christmas is expressed in JOY. Joy is one of the results of Christmas giving.

Joy is easily misunderstood. Too often, we think that to be joyful, we need to be outwardly excited, even euphoric. This is not true, as having true joy is much deeper than an emotional feeling. Joy is more of an inner gladness that is steady. It is not based on an outward reaction to an event that makes us happy; rather, it is a response to a heartfelt understanding of what is happening. Joy feeds resolve and determination. Joy contributes to our willingness to be transformed.

#### The true spirit of JOY in the Christmas story:

<u>Luke 2:8-12</u>: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; <sup>11</sup>for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

After generations of waiting and hoping, the Messiah was finally here! This joy that would be for all people would be a life-changing internal gladness.

### (1) What is Christmas all about, *Rethink Church*

What do you think Christmas is all about? (Children answer)

- The birth of Jesus.
- Christmas is about sharing and Jesus being born.
- Instead of getting presents and all, it's about the birth of Jesus since it's really special.
- He was born, and I love him when he was born.
- It feels like happiness. Happiness is in the air.
- We get to learn about the Christmas story.
- I never get tired of hearing it.

Why do you think baby Jesus is important? (Children answer)

- Jesus, when he was born, he was born to help the world.
- We wrapped a baby in the manger, and we unwrap him on his birthday. He's a real gift.
- The greatest gift of Christmas is that you're alive, you have a new life.
- He has given us His son and he has made the world a better place.







Please go to <u>ChristianQuestions.com/youtube</u> to see our inspirational videos, including the CQ Kids Videos: What is the story of Jesus' birth? and Who were the Maji?

#### There was to be joy as a result of the birth of John the Baptist:

<u>Luke 1:12-15,17</u>: (NASB) <sup>12</sup>Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. <sup>13</sup>But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zacharias...your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. <sup>14</sup>You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. <sup>15</sup>For he will be great in the sight of the Lord... <sup>17</sup>It is he who will go as a forerunner before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children...

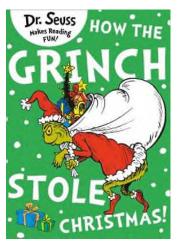
#### There was to be joy at the anticipation of the birth of Jesus:

<u>Luke 1:41-44</u>: (NASB) <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup>And she cried out with a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup>And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? <sup>44</sup>For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.



How do we practically exhibit the true joy of the Christmas message in a world that seems to have no room or tolerance for it?

Our joy comes from knowing for sure the Christmas story is true. God gave His only begotten son to mankind as a ransom for all. In the Greek, that word ransom means a "corresponding price" to substitute for the perfect man, Adam. Christmas is not just one day. Christmas is beyond being happy. Joy is deeper than happy and more lasting, not dependent upon outside circumstances.



We cannot help but think of the story, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, by Dr. Seuss, published in 1957. The Grinch was so tired of all the fake, loud, excessiveness over Christmas coming from the townspeople that he took everything from the residents of Whoville - the toys, trees, candy, Christmas dinners, decorations, even the last crumb from the mouse:

...Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small...were singing without any presents at all. He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming. It came. Somehow or other, it came just the same! It came without ribbons! It came without tags! It came without packages, boxes or bags! And he puzzled and puzzled 'til his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more.



The real Grinch was Seuss himself, Theodor Geisel, who was 53 years old and fed up with Christmas. He was tired of the noise, the constant activity, and the business end of the holiday and wished everyone would get along with each other. His desire was that people would celebrate the joy and peacefulness of Christmas without all the hoopla detracting from it, so he wrote a story about it to teach people a lesson. The story ends with a shared community tradition. (See: <a href="https://writingwithsharonwatson.com/the-story-behind-dr-seuss-and-the-grinch/">https://writingwithsharonwatson.com/the-story-behind-dr-seuss-and-the-grinch/</a>)

The Christian's joy is from knowing the birth of Jesus was true...and it changed the world!

Rick's sister, Joy, sent us an email this past week. In it, she was focusing on joy. She has been asking others, "What brings you delight?" and "What are your greatest moments of joy?" This can open up a discussion with others and gives us an opportunity to share our joy in the Lord. When done with sincerity and love, this may help them be more tolerant of hearing that Jesus came to save the world.



### The Blessings of Toy

God's plan provides joy for all people. Most do not yet have any idea what that means.

We know.

Let us take the joy given us through Christ and witness it with words and actions.

When we sing *Joy to the World*, we can really mean it! Most importantly, this joy MUST begin with me!



With true joy welling up within our hearts, what is the next result of Christmas giving we receive?

The picture we have painted thus far shows us that the true spirit - the true intention of Christmas - is built around giving. This giving is focused on our immediate families and our whole human family and inevitably brings joy when recognized. The next result of this giving is peace for all!



The true spirit of Christmas is expressed in **PEACE**. This is the peace of God that comes as a result of the gift of Jesus.

As Christians, we have access to "the peace that passes understanding" through Jesus. While this is a priceless kind of peace, it is also a very individual peace.



The peace that comes from the true spirit of Christmas is broader and will eventually be permanent for all.

#### The true spirit of PEACE in the Christmas story:

<u>Luke 2:13-14</u>: (KJV) <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, <sup>14</sup>Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

There is a broadness to this peace, as it covers the whole earth.

### (Part one), The History of Silent Night (Part one), The Skit Guys

High in the Austrian Alps in the cold and snowy village of Mariapfarr (south of Salzburg), a young priest named Joseph Mohr had been assigned to the parish, but he walked the streets with a heavy heart. Napoleon's war had wreaked havoc across Europe. Mohr had witnessed firsthand the depression of the economy and the suffering of the village where he had once resided. There was no doubt the young priest sought after God's stillness and peace. And it was here, lost in the majestic view of the towering mountains, where he penned the lyrics that reached for hope from the holy night that changed the world forever. As tradition tells it, two years later Mohr was preparing for midnight mass when he discovered their faithful organ had played its last note. Desperate to find a song for his parishioners to sing on Christmas Eve, Mohr grabbed the lyrics he had written two years before, left his church and journeyed to the home of his friend, organist Franz Gruber. He showed Franz the words and asked him to compose a simple melody that could be accompanied by only a guitar. And so, on December 24th, 1818, Mohr's poetic expression of the birth of Jesus was sung by a humble congregation on a snowy, cold Christmas Eve, filling them with the hope of heavenly peace.

# The peace of God through Jesus first comes to those who follow in Jesus' footsteps:

<u>John 14:27</u>: (NASB) Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

### The History of Silent Night (Part two), The Skit Guys

• Over the next century, "Silent Night" would spread across the world. And then in 1914, those same lyrics birthed in the aftermath of war, found their way back to the battlefield. On Christmas Eve, both English and German troops laid down their weapons and sang together about God's peace from deep in the trenches of the First World War. To this day, God pours out His gift of heavenly peace to all who will receive it. From high mountains to low battlefields, church choirs to families 'round the tree, we celebrate the very moment God transformed humanity by sending the greatest gift of all on that first silent and holy night.

Jesus' very presence on earth signaled a new beginning, which would bring a new peace. The massive gift of peace to all comes in stages.

#### Simeon the old prophet revealed this when Jesus was just eight days old:

<u>Luke 2:27-32</u>: (NASB) <sup>27</sup>And he (Simeon) came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for him the custom of the Law, <sup>28</sup>then he took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, <sup>29</sup>Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant



to depart in peace, according to Your word; <sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen Your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup>a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.

We do not know how many years Simeon had waited to see the promised Messiah. How many children he may have looked at, wondering, "Is this the one?" At this moment he responds, speaking prophetically.



How do we live the "peace on earth" promise given by the angels now, when the world is anything but peaceful?

We live peace by developing the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If we remember, "God's got this," and trust Him, we will have peace no matter how crazy this world becomes. <u>Isaiah 26:3</u> promises if we keep our mind on Him, He will keep us in perfect peace.

Let's start with what is happening: The world is not at peace because we are living apart from God. Sin separates us from Him and prevents us from having the relationship with Him that would enable the earth to experience this true peace. One of Jesus' roles is to be the mediator between God and mankind, restoring that broken relationship with God. As footstep followers, we have the opportunity to participate in that amazing restoration in the kingdom. This privilege should give us peace that this present evil world will be replaced with God's righteous government.

From a personal standpoint, our internal peace should not fluctuate based on the opinions of others, our circumstances or whatever accomplishments we achieve. Our concern should be what God thinks of us, not anyone else. This is especially important today with social media.

Philippians 4:11-13: (NIV) <sup>11</sup>...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup>I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup>I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Paul had peace because of his absolute belief in the resurrected Jesus. His life looked like an adventure movie with riots and prisons and shipwrecks, but his internal peace never fluctuated.

God gives us the internal ability to cope. Having hope for the world produces a stronger peace than just us individually feeling better.

#### A finished look at the peace that the true spirit of Christmas brings:

<u>Isaiah 11:9-10</u>: (NASB) <sup>9</sup>They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. <sup>10</sup>Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and his resting place will be glorious.

The earth will be full of knowledge of the Lord - this is the peace of God in action! This is one of many prophecies that point to God's future kingdom.





### The Blessings of Peace

The peace of God through Jesus can transform us now even when our world is in turmoil.

This is but a preview of the fullness of His peace to come to all. Live His peace!

Peace is such a lost quality. We have to make sure we have it before we try and give it away to others.

The spirit of Christmas provides joy and peace. What does having these attributes bring us to next?

We have joy and peace as direct results of the giving we receive from both God our Father and His son Jesus. The true spirit - true intention - of Christmas now brings us to a point of wanting to give back. What could we possibly have to offer in return for such gifts? We always have the gift of praise.



The true spirit of Christmas is expressed in **PRAISE**. While praise is always in order, there are times when it becomes a priority. The miraculous gift of Jesus makes praise profoundly necessary.

As Christians, we are very aware of the critical role praise plays in our daily lives. Just like with peace, praise is now a localized and individual practice. The praise that results from the gift of Jesus will ultimately cover not only all of this earth but the heavens as well!

Satan so hates the genuine praise of Christ that his fiery darts of discouragement are not effective against us when we respond in praise. — William Thrasher

Do we want to be impervious to Satan's attacks? Live with praise, joy and the acknowledgment of the gifts we have been given.

#### The true spirit of PRAISE in the Christmas story:

<u>Luke 2:15-20</u>: (NASB) <sup>15</sup>When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us. <sup>16</sup>So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as he lay in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child. <sup>18</sup>And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

The shepherds were outspoken and in one accord, telling all that they had seen. Do we glorify and praise God for all we have heard and seen?



Our being faithful in thought, word and deed brings praise to God in our Christian walk. Our inward faithfulness and loyalty shows praise when we are in harmony with His ways. Praise is not only the exuberance of joy; it is also the quiet obedience of heart, mind and action.

The true spirit of praise now is expressed in imperfect ways by imperfect people who have doubts. This dramatization of Mary talking to a young shepherd boy after Jesus' birth and after the shepherds have come and gone shows this praise through imperfection.

### (Part one), The Skit Guys

• (Mary, talking to a young shepherd) It's okay, you can come in. He won't bite; he's just a small baby. A little shy? Well, that's okay. I am, too. Your friends left in such a rush to "go tell the world." I think that's how they put it. And what a thing to tell. Did you know an angel visited me, too? It's true. And he said that my boy would be great. The son of God. He said that he would be the king of angels, the king of all. Do you think that they'll understand? Do you think that they'll come to worship him? Will they accept him? It's just...look around us. It's not exactly a palace, is it? Noisy animals, hay, out of all things, for a bed, and that stench! For everything that he is, maybe this isn't enough.

#### The worthiness of Jesus:

<u>Philippians 2:7-11</u>: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>For this reason also, God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Part of praise is being willing to access awe, finding the "awe" of God's plans and purposes. Jesus had a position with God Himself, but he *emptied himself* and became a man. Then he did it again, suffering and dying on the cross with humiliation so humanity would have an opportunity for life. This is awe-inspiring! The gift is powerful! We want to praise God through our obedience and thankfulness.

### (Part two), The Skit Guys

• I find myself just watching him, adoring him. I thought I knew what love was until he came along. My mother gave this blanket to me when I was just a little girl, a gift of love. I wore it out. When we were preparing for the trip to Bethlehem, I told Joseph I wanted to bring it. "No," he said, "we must pack light." I brought it anyway. The baby needs a blanket. Yes, they will come. The faithful. How could they not? He was born the king of angels. He will be great and mighty. He is all this and more. But when you go tell my young friend, be sure to tell them he is an incredible gift of love.



#### The results of Jesus' worthiness:

<u>Isaiah 35:8-10</u>: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>A highway will be there, a roadway, and it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, but it will be for him who walks that way, and fools will not wander on it. <sup>9</sup>No lion will be there, nor will any vicious beast go up on it; these will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there, <sup>10</sup> and the ransomed of the LORD will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.





True and intentional praise
has a way of keeping life in perspective.
We are blessed with the gift of Jesus
to the whole human family
which brings us joy, produces peace and
fills our hearts with praise.
This is the true spirit of Christmas!

The Bible does not require we celebrate the birth of Jesus, but it seems appropriate. In its proper context, it can put us in the right frame of mind to focus on heavenly things. We cannot read the story as an academic exercise. We need to delight in the story that gives us a glimpse into God's supreme love for His creation, that He would give His only begotten son to repair the relationship between God and man. It is awe-inspiring!

The story of the birth of Jesus is simple but one of the most profound beginnings of all human history. We do not want to let the lights, presents, decorations and food override the life-changing results of the birth of that little baby over 2,000 years ago. He would grow up to become the man who would bear the sins of Adam so that every human being could live again. This is the true meaning of Christmas.

He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree. — Roy L. Smith





# What is the true spirit of Christmas? For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie!) and Christian Questions... Think about it...!



Join us next week for our podcast on December 30, 2019: Ep. 1106: Should My Habits Be Kept or Broken?

