

Christmas:

IT'S ALL GOOD

It's All Good: Be The News

The earliest believers in Jesus classified his life, teaching, and mission as “good news,” so if our version of Christianity isn’t good news, we have the wrong version. Because what transpired in Judea two thousand years ago isn’t just a good story. When we examine the accounts closely, it’s hard not to agree with the earliest followers, who realized that it is actually *good news for all people*. And this revelation requires us to *embody* that good news for the benefit of others, and for the generations to come.

Start Talking

1. Have you ever been shocked by kindness or grace? What happened? Who went out of their way to make your life better?
2. Have you ever surprised someone with kindness? Was it intentional? How did it come about?

Looking Back

1. How did you remind yourself of your need for a savior this week?
2. Did it affect the way you interacted with others? With God? How?
3. Were there times you were tempted to associate God with condemnation and fear? How did you react and resist those manipulative voices?

What About You?

1. Do you know anyone who de-converted from Christianity? What reasons did they give?
2. Have you been tempted to give up on faith because of an encounter with a person of faith?
3. When you think about American Christianity, what comes to mind? How is it different than the actual good news of Jesus? Does it apply to *all* people?



4. Andy pointed out some of the ways that the church and culture have contorted the good news of Jesus to fit a variety of agendas. Did any of these ring true for you? Have you been exposed to a faith that was Americanized? Centered on selfish ideas about personal prosperity? Perverted by partisan politics? Anti-intellectual? Internalized as a process of abstract belief with no real-world application?

Look It Up

Read the Following Passages: Luke 2:10–11. Philippians 2: 1–8, 12–15. Matthew 5:14–16. Galatians 3:28.

1. Have you ever met a Christian whose approach to relationships reflects Paul's instructions in Philippians two?
2. What do you think Paul means when he talks about how there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, nor male or female in the kingdom of God? How should this change the way we operate within the structures of a power-obsessed world?
3. Why do you think Paul chose to emphasize the importance of being united by love, rather than shared belief on theological specifics?
4. When we think about the reality of who Jesus was and what kind of life and death he chose, what values seemed to animate his choices? What were his operating principles? How did they conflict with the world around him?

Putting It All Together

1. Is anyone coming for Christmas who needs to see and experience the good news through you? What's one unexpected thing you could do for that person that would make your light shine a little brighter than usual?
2. What does Paul's advice for relationships look like in the real world? How can you, this very week, embody the example of Jesus?
3. Which of the various forces within American Christianity threaten to drag you away from the true, good news of Jesus? Americanized faith? Prosperity gospel? Partisan political warfare? Anti-intellectual Christianity? Internal "me and God" belief with no social applications?
4. How can you re-orient yourself to the radically *good* news of Jesus when you're pulled in those directions?
5. Andy outlined four specific ways we can be good news: To apologize immediately. Forgive quickly. Defer habitually. And give sacrificially. Which of these do you find easiest? Which is most difficult?
6. How can you build these habits into your week?

