

Christmas December 3, 2023
For God so loved the world...

John 3:16 For this is how God loved the world: He gave His one & only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through Him.

John 1:10 He came into the very world He created, but the world didn't recognize Him. 11 He came to His own people, & even they rejected Him. 12 But to all who believed Him & accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God.

Luke 2:10 the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. 11 The Savior-yes, the Messiah, the Lord has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ...13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others - the armies of heaven - praising God & saying, 14 "Glory to God in highest heaven, & peace on earth to those w/ whom God is pleased."

The first promoters of Jesus weren't the religious elite or kings & rulers. Just common shepherds, ordinary working-class folk. The shepherds were the first evangelists. They took the good news that was told to them by the angels & what they saw w/ their own eyes, & shared it w/ everyone they met. They spread the good news that would bring great joy to all people. Later, Jesus commissioned His followers to spread the good news - "Therefore, go & make disciples of all nations."

1 John 4:9 God showed how much He loved us by sending His one & only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. 10 This is real love - not that we loved God, but that He loved us & sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. 12 No one's ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, & His love is brought to full expression in us. 13 And God has given us His Spirit as proof that we live in Him & He in us. 14 Furthermore, we've seen w/ our own eyes & now testify that the Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

2 Corinthians 5:17 ...anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life's gone; a new life has begun! 18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to Himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to Him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right w/ God through Christ.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes...

Christmas season is the easiest time of the year for us to share the good news of Jesus w/ our friends, family, & neighbors. But often, the busyness of the season suppresses our passion for sharing about Jesus w/ people who need to know it & might be hungry to hear it.

Christmas offers a unique opportunity to spread the Good News...

6 keys to sharing about Jesus during Christmas

1. PRAY

Follow Jesus' example by first praying. Be intentional w/ your prayers, ask God to give you opportunities to share your faith w/ friends, family, neighbors, or strangers. Think of specific people in your life & pray that their eyes would be opened. Pray for wisdom & discernment for yourself in knowing how best to love them.

2. GIVE IT TO GOD

Good news about the good news: it's not all up to you. Our evangelism efforts can seem fruitless & discouraging at times. But, the Bible's clear: we can't save people. God does that. Some people won't be interested in having a spiritual conversation at Christmas. We're called to share the good news w/ those who want to hear it, not force people to hear it. By serving & loving others at Christmas, seeds are planted. We might not be the ones that see that seed grow, but God does amazing things, things that we can't even begin to imagine.

3. SERVE

Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, & gave hope to the broken. He didn't just preach, but met physical, emotional, & spiritual needs. Many people are truly hurting this time of year, whether visibly or beneath the surface. Consider how you can love the people around you & help meet their needs. Whether volunteering to help the homeless or delivering cookies to your neighbors & co-workers. It's a lot easier to believe that Jesus loves you when one of His followers has shown that love to you.

4. BE AWARE OF OPPORTUNITIES

You don't have to go far to find Jesus at Christmas, opportunities to share your faith can come up almost any time. A spiritual conversation can stem from asking, "How are you planning to celebrate Christmas?" Friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, etc. who've shown no interest in church, may be open to hearing about the birth of Jesus, & what that means to you. People will listen if they know you care about them.

In a post-Christian culture that has secularized Jesus out of Christmas, there're still many creative ways to introduce people to the REAL story behind the commercialized story.

5. MOVE BEYOND THE MANGER

So much of the focus at Christmas is on the baby Jesus, lying in a manger. That's a great starting point for the gospel, but it's important that the conversation doesn't stop there. People need to know who He is, why He came, what He accomplished through His death, resurrection & ascension, & how they can follow Him & be transformed by Him.

6. INVITE PEOPLE TO CHURCH

If there's any time in the year that unchurched people are open to an invitation to church, it's Christmas. Everyone's open to a Candlelight service. A recent national survey discovered that nearly 60% of people would attend a Christmas event if invited by someone they knew.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people.