

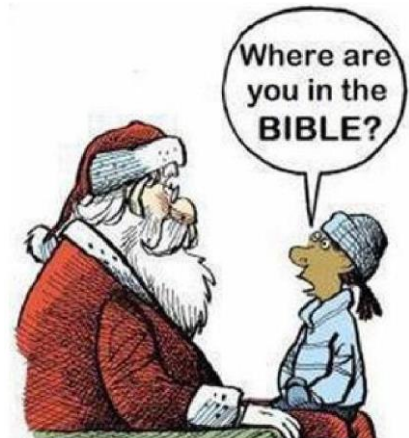
Celebrating a Christ-Centered Christmas



The Christmas Season is a challenging time for believers, especially Christian Children. There are so many distractions to alter our focus away from the birth of Jesus - the miracle of God becoming one of us. Not only are there distractions, but there is a great amount of social pressure to accept, conform, and embrace a manner of celebrating that actually dishonors Jesus Christ.

The world maintains a message that distracts people's attention away from the coming of our Lord and Savior. Many of the celebrated symbols for Christmas have nothing to do with Christmas at all. Many parents don't realize the harm that is done by promoting a belief in Santa Claus.

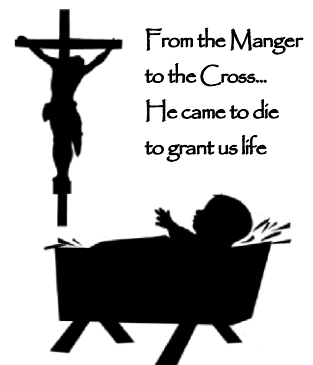
Think about it.. Really THINK! What would you call a mythical figure who is said to have the power to know when you have been good and when you have been bad? ... Who is aware of your actions at all times, knowing when you sleep and when you are awake? Who will judge your conduct and reward your "goodness"? ...Who is said to be able to receive your prayerful requests and wishes and has power to answer them? ...Who is said to have the ability to visit everyone throughout the whole world in a single night? ...Who has songs sung about him and television shows and plays dedicated to perpetuating his name? ...Whose image is displayed in homes, on lawns, in advertising and in store displays? ...Who also was replacing the significance of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ in the hearts and minds of the public during the Christmas season, so much so that declaring this myth as a lie brings the hostile reaction from his devotees that you are "spoiling Christmas for the children?" What would you call him? While the world may call him "Santa Claus" and wrongly even refer to him as "the spirit of Christmas," it is clear that such teaching runs afoul of sound biblical doctrine. Scripture declares any figure, who is attributed such characteristics and devotion, as an IDOL! Moreover, teaching children to believe in what you know is not true is called LYING! The divine attributes of omniscience (knowing all things), omnipresence (present in all places), omnipotence (having power over all) belong to the one true God alone.



Romans 1:21-23 (KJV); 21 ... when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man...

December 25th was selected by the church fathers as a counter celebration to a pagan feast day filled with wicked revelry. It was a time when the faithful were called away from the sinful worldly celebrations and summoned to reflect on the first coming of our Lord and to anticipate his return. Sadly, many Christians have unwittingly fallen into the devil's trap and allowed the world to reclaim the celebration within their homes and even within their hearts. Anything that diverts our attention away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be of God.

John 1:14 (KJV); And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.



God became human so that we might be saved by his grace, yet today even many church goers will vehemently argue in defense of mixing Santa Claus, a fictional character with idolatrous attributes, into the Christmas story in order to "make it fun" or because "everyone else is doing it." They will say, "it really doesn't matter... its harmless" while lying to children about this fictional character being real and encouraging them to believe in him. Some will

argue that Santa Claus is based on the historical Saint Nicholas... without realizing that the real Nicholas would reject the Santa Claus myth as dishonoring the Lord Jesus Christ. Some say that disregarding Santa Claus is "ruining Christmas"... as all the while the Devil laughs at the success of his work in their minds and hearts as they deny Jesus Christ the glory that is due... all the while favoring a fictional character instead of the living Lord. The Devil is pleased as those who claim to be Christian yet equate the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with myth and fiction.

Christians should dedicate themselves to the true meaning of the season and be loving witnesses to those who are still lost or confused. The Christmas Season is about Christ and Christ Alone! This is truly a special and holy time of year for the disciples of Jesus Christ. Believers should take time to pause and reflect on the miracle of the Incarnation of our Lord and the love of God proven through that miracle.

Divinely Inspired Strategy and Effort

There is overwhelming pressure to favor the type of celebrating that is attempting to turn Christmas into a secular holiday by disrespecting and disregarding it as a Christian holy day. So, turning away from the false images and practices that distract from the true meaning of Christmas and, instead, turning toward a Christ-centered celebration requires divinely inspired strategy... especially when trying to engage children.

Here are a few ideas that can aid in helping young children focus on Christ instead of Santa Claus...

1. ***Biblical Decorations:*** Instead of reindeer, elves, and Santa, decorate your home with angels, sheep, stars, shepherds, and wise men.
2. ***Home Made Nativity Scenes:*** Nativity scenes with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph can be purchased, but it can be a fun and educational experience to make a scene with cardboard or clay or some other craft material and display it in your home.
3. ***Stories Based On Scripture:*** Read stories and view videos that focus on the biblical story. Coloring books focused on the birth of Christ are also a way to share the true story and have something your child made to display.
4. ***Visit Living Nativity Scenes:*** In many communities there are living Nativity scenes with live actors and animals recreating the experience of the first Christmas. Sadly, even with these efforts, you may find that Santa will be included by the organization hosting the event... if so, be discerning and discuss this potential mixed and confusing message with your child.
5. ***Buy Or Make Items To Wear That Are A Witness:*** Buttons, hats, shirts and sweaters can be purchased that promote the faithful message that Christmas is all about Jesus. Such items can also be fun to make by decorating clothing with such slogans or images and also by making buttons to wear.
6. ***Make Edible Treats That Lift The Biblical Images Of Christmas:*** Make cookies, candies, cakes, or other items that are in the shape of sheep, angels, stars, etc... If baking is not your thing, buy items that can be decorated with images that help focus on the real reason for the season.
7. ***Read The Nativity Story From A Children's Bible:*** There are illustrated Bibles for children that can be wonderful in teaching the importance of the birth of Jesus. Read with your children and have them tell the story back to you, rewarding them as they learn the details and can recite them.
8. ***Associate Gift Giving With The Magi And With God's Gift To Us:*** As Jesus is a gift to all believers and as the Magi (Wise Men) brought gifts to the young child Jesus, we give gifts also. Focus on this aspect of gift giving in celebration of the birth of Jesus.
9. ***Have A Birthday Party For Jesus:*** Celebrate the birth of Jesus with a birthday party for Jesus, complete with Bible-themed games, crafts, music, and treats.

10. **Do Something Charitable:** Teach the importance of Christian compassion and charity by helping your child to make gifts, cards, or write letters to lift the spirits of shut-ins. Raise money to send to worthy charities, especially those that bring the Gospel of Christ to those they help.
11. **Sing Christ Focused Christmas Songs And Listen To Biblically Based Music:** Fill your home with music that focuses on the Lord. Sing Christmas hymns with your child. Reward them for being able to sing a Christian Christmas song from memory.
12. **Celebrate Advent:** Share the themes of Advent (the four Sundays prior to Christmas) with you child. Learn scriptures that relate to the themes and focus on the coming of Christ.
13. **Regular Prayer:** All of your efforts to celebrate Christ must be "bathed in prayer." Pray with your child about the coming of Christ and even for those who are confused by the fairy tale of Santa Claus. Have them write and/or draw their prayers to share or be displayed.
14. **Worship At Church:** While every believer should be in worship each Sunday, be sure to take advantage of additional experiences the church is providing through Advent and Christmas. Worship is the primary way to ensure that your Christmas is Christ-Centered.
15. **Tell The Truth:** Honor the Lord by telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth to your child. Focus on history and not fantasy.

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