



FAMILY STUDY

Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?

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"Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?"

That Disappointing Feeling...

How often as parents have we struggled with keeping Christ the center of Christmas? We spend our time rushing around to find that perfect gift. We hear daily, "Mommy, I want this and this and this for Christmas..." Often a child's Christmas wish list grows longer as each day passes. How often have you observed that a child receives many new toys at Christmas, but within hours of getting his new toys, he or she is bored? For parents, it can be exasperating. You've spent countless hours shopping, hours wrapping, and hours decorating, all to have your child come and complain about what he was given, or what he didn't get.

How often have you or your children experienced the sense of disappointment on Christmas? After the Christmas morning rush and after the presents have been opened, you sit down to rest, and a feeling of discontentment and a sense of something missing fills your heart.

Why is there this sense of disappointment? If we look at the root issue, we will find that it is the attitude of our hearts. Our focus has been off. The Christmas celebration was off center because we missed the whole point of Christmas.

"I Came Not to Be Served, But to Serve..."

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

We know that this is the reason we celebrate Christmas, but why do we seem to miss the point of Christmas and end the day with a feeling of emptiness? It is because we are trying to fill the void with things instead of Christ.

On that first Christmas, there were no gifts, no pretty bows, no brightly colored Christmas trees. There was just a baby wrapped in humble cloths lying in a manger. And while the angels proclaimed the birth of the King of kings, the only ones who heard this proclamation were poor, lowly, smelly shepherds. Why didn't God proclaim the good news that His Son was born from the highest mountains and to all the ends of the earth? Why just shepherds? Once again, it's all about the focus. Christ didn't come to serve himself, he came to be our sacrifice.

"...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28b)

Christ's focus wasn't on himself, it was always on others. And so, it seems that often the emptiness and discontentment we feel at Christmas is because our focus is not like Christ's. Rather than focusing on Him and on others, we have fallen into the trap of focusing on ourselves. Children are especially guilty of this, but as parents, are we not just as guilty for letting the focus be on themselves?

Spirit of Christmas: Service and Sacrifice

So, how do we reclaim the spirit of Christmas? One way is to look for others to serve and minister as a family. Is there someone you know who needs some encouragement, or service, or gift that you can give without any expectation for return? Find someone and minister to them.

God's Word tells us in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Webster's Dictionary defines blessed as, "bringing pleasure or contentment; enjoying happiness, or to confer prosperity or happiness upon." When we give to others, we receive the blessing of happiness, contentment, and pleasure. Isn't it odd that most people are looking for happiness, contentment, and pleasure by *getting* things rather than *giving*, and yet *giving* brings about a sense of contentment much more than *getting* ever does. Ecclesiastes 5:10-11 tells us, "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?" This passage reminds us that the pursuit of "getting" will always leave us feeling empty.

The Emptiness of Wealth and the Pursuit of Things

Proverbs 15:27

Ecclesiastes 5:10-6:2 Luke 12:15

The Promised Blessings of Giving

Psalm 37:25-26

Psalm 112:5

Proverbs 11:24-25

Proverbs 22:9

Proverbs 28:27

Malachi 3:10

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

1 Timothy 6:17-19

The Blessed Gift Found in Giving

A child will not believe this to be true until he experiences it for himself. So as a family, take time out of your busy schedule to bless another family in need. What a blessing it is to help out someone else, and what fun it can be to plan and surprise someone with your gift of time or service or material goods. Make it a family project.

May we also encourage you to plan to bless someone in secret? Matthew 6:2-4 says, "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Commands to Give to Others

Philippians 2:3-5

Romans 12:13

2 Corinthians 8:10-14

Hebrews 13:16

"...Peace on Earth, and Goodwill to Men"

Do you want the peace and contentment that we so long for and talk about at Christmas? Then look for ways to bless someone else. Encourage your children to serve and help others instead of focusing only on themselves. Spread goodwill to others just as Christ did. Be generous with your time and money. Look out for the needs of others, and you will recapture the spirit of Christmas and honor the Lord's birthday.

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6:38) Give. Encourage your children to give, and experience the true joy of Christmas. May God bless you this Christmas as you serve Him!