

Keeping Christ in Christmas – Every Day of the Year

When a friend posted this question on an online forum, *“How do we keep Jesus Christ and His birth at the center of our Christmas celebration?”* I gave a thought of thought to my answer. This question is particularly important to me because I wasn’t raised in a Christian home, and yet, my family celebrated Christmas. We hung stockings, decorated a Christmas tree, exchanged gifts and played Santa, just like every other red-blooded American family.

By the time I was a teenager, I was an outspoken atheist who loved to argue with my Christian friends, and yet, I had little understanding of the Christian faith. I did not understand that Christians believed that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh and that Christmas was celebrated to remember the day He was born on earth to live as a man. It was not until I was 21-years-old and had many heated debates with a Christian young man (who later became my husband) that I heard the good news of the gospel – that I could be forgiven by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, turning away from my sin and following Him.

So, with that background, let me encourage everyone how truly important it is to keep the birth of Jesus at the focus of your Christmas celebrations. In response to the question, *“How do we keep Jesus Christ at the center of Christmas?”* the answer is to intentionally seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, setting your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:1-2)

Yes, we festively decorate our home and Christmas tree. Yes, we buy gifts for our children and other members of our family. Yes, we drive around town and look at pretty Christmas lights. But, no, we don’t spend days and weeks putting up and taking down decorations. We refuse to go into debt feeding our kids’ appetites for stuff and our own appetite to impress others with our earthly possessions. And, no, we do not pack on December with a dozen holiday events because, truthfully, they take our family’s eyes off the true gift of Jesus and just add busy-ness to our already full lives.



After following Jesus for over twenty years, though, I have learned that the Christian life is so much more than a list of do’s and don’ts. It really is a living relationship with the great Creator, Ruler of the Universe, and Lord of my soul, so please do not see my suggestions as added rules and burdens for you to follow. Evaluate your own advent activities to see whether they are drawing your family to a closer relationship with Jesus or pushing you farther away. Truly, when you seek the Lord with all your heart, you will find Him. Jesus is truly our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His Word is a light to our feet. You can trust Him, and you can trust His Word.

With that said, here are some choices we've made to help us not lose Jesus amidst our Yuletide celebrations –

- We taught our kids from a young age that playing pretend is fun, but it's just pretend. God is real. Santa is pretend. The Bible is real. Fairy tales are pretend. Yes, we put out cookies for Santa. Yes, we stuffed stockings. It was fun! But our kids knew the truth. I decided that God wanted us to be truth bearers and I wanted my kids to trust that Mommy and Daddy always speak the truth. That didn't mean we couldn't play pretend – but they knew we are pretending.
- We try to have most of our gifts bought by December 1, so our minds are not consumed by shopping. The stress of finding "the perfect gifts" is not good for the "Christmas spirit."
- We limit ourselves to three gifts per child. This limits not only the money, but also the time and energy, we spend on Christmas gifts.
- I force myself to go to bed at night. If it's not done by 10:30, then it doesn't need to be done. Tomorrow is another day. A tired mommy is a cranky mommy.
- Each of our four children choose a gift for each of their siblings and parents and they use some of their own money to buy them. This helps them focus on giving, rather than just receiving.
- When it's time to open gifts, we each take turns *giving* our gifts to the recipients, rather than the recipients *taking* their gifts.
- We enjoy a daily time of prayer, scripture reading and discussion for the 25 days of advent.

Which leads me back to the original question: *"How do we keep Jesus Christ and His birth at the center of our Christmas celebration?"*

This certainly is a good question to ask, but may I suggest that the better question is this:

"How do we keep Christ at the center of every single day of the year?"

365 days-a-year we can choose to seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, setting your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. I'm praying that this holiday season, and for all the days of our lives, that we would, trust in the LORD with all our hearts, leaning not on our own understanding, acknowledging Him in all our ways. (Proverbs 3:5-6)



In His Service,

Kim Endraske

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