



By Dr. Richard Youngblood

Question: How can we celebrate Christmas all year long? What would Jesus do?

Although many of us may disdain the commercialism of the Christmas season, I pray that we will never abandon the practice of sharing gifts, smiles and cheerful greetings that go with the season. The generous love and kindness that permeates the darkness of December is unsurpassed by any season of the year. While selfish people may only enjoy receiving gifts, others have observed that the greater joy is in giving, blessing and encouraging those around us during this season. Jesus did say, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). With this in mind, allow me to suggest some ways to keep the spirit of Christmas alive all year long.

We can begin with a simple smile for everyone we meet. I’ve been told that fewer facial muscles are needed to smile than to frown. If this is so, smiles should come easier even when we don’t feel so well. Then, we may be surprised to find that our feelings will follow our actions. As our smiles bounce from face to face the spirit of Christmas joy spreads in every season.

Smiles can be accompanied by kind and respectful words (Colossians 4:6). I propose this gift especially for those who serve us in restaurants and businesses. Few things kill the joy of any day more than confronting a patron who is quick to pass judgment and criticize harshly. At the same time, nothing can lift those who serve us more quickly than kind words that show gracious understanding even when mistakes are made. And don’t forget a generous tip. The next customer will greatly benefit, and Christmas joy shows up in July.

Hospitality is another wonderful part of the Christmas season: festive parties, friends and family gathering. But we should open our homes to friends and acquaintances throughout the year (Hebrews 13:2). We all need times of solitude, but we also need the blessing of interaction with others. God made us that way. If we do not use our homes, we can visit the homes of those whose health does not permit them to get out. We can invite someone to go eat with us at a restaurant. Hospitality involves all of these actions and more. Why not keep the Christmas spirit alive through regular hospitality throughout the year.

Other ways to extend the Christmas spirit to twelve months of the year may include sending notes of appreciation to people in our lives. We could be a Secret Santa in September by sending anonymous notes or gifts of appreciation to the mailman (or woman), the auto mechanic or someone else who gets little notice most

of the time. Experience the joy of doing something nice for others without their knowing who did it. Jesus taught that giving to be seen by others has its own limited reward, but those who give secretly are rewarded by our heavenly Father who sees all things (Matthew 6:2-4). We could also make a blessings list and write down at least one new thing each day. By doing these things, a person can experience Christmas joy every month of the year.

The power to give and to live a joyful life at Christmas or any time of the year comes only from Jesus Christ. His birth brought great joy to our world (Luke 2:10ff). That joy was extended throughout his life by blessing, healing, teaching, forgiving and serving others each day he lived. After dying for the sins of the world, he arose from the grave, ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God to rule over his kingdom. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus now lives in those who trust and obey him (Acts 2:38; 5:32). This does not mean we will avoid all of the troubles of life in this fallen world, but it does mean we have assurance of his presence to support us and give us the victory of eternal life if we will remain faithful (Revelation 2:10).

I am not proposing that we replace the joyous celebrations of Christmas; however, I am suggesting that we can spread something of the Christmas spirit throughout the year. God bless you and may you have a very Merry Christmas.

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