

Leader's Guide

JESUS TEACHES US... ABOUT LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

December 3 2006
John 15:18-16:4

LEADER'S GUIDE
for small group
discussion prepared
to aid you in digging
deeper and taking to
heart what we are
exploring on
Sunday mornings.



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Overview

Many Christians seem to be “up in arms” about making sure that everyone “keeps Christ in Christmas.” But Jesus would probably not be at all surprised that so many seem to want to have little, if anything, to do with Him. He warned His followers (and us!) that “the world” is going to “hate Him” and, subsequently, not like us too much either!

Walk it through

Opening up with the “Merry Christmas” debate will help anchor the discussion both in what *we* face during this season as well as what *Jesus said* that has bearing on our lives.

When you read Jesus’ words, keep in mind what “the world” is that He refers to. He is not speaking, specifically, about “wicked people.” The world is simply a way to speak about those who are living on the planet who don’t have a genuine relationship with the living God. Those who are without such a relationship, and the “system” of life that goes with that, are “the world.”

Jesus makes it clear. He wasn’t surprised by the world’s rejection of Him; and as followers of His we shouldn’t be surprised either. Because those “in the world” don’t know the living God, they are antagonistic towards Jesus and towards His followers. That is, in Jesus’ words, the given state of things!

Although we can wish those we meet “Merry Christmas,” we can’t really take issue with the animosity and resistance such a greeting often engenders. Those “in the world” are merely responding like Jesus said they would. Rather than arguing about the “rightness” of saying “Merry Christmas,” perhaps this Christmas we could be more concerned about caring for others the way the One who Came at Christmas cares!

Discussion Guide

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Thinking it through . . .

There has been a fair amount of “debate” recently about what kind of greeting is appropriate for this holiday season in a public setting. Is “happy holidays” OK? Should everyone be encouraged to say “Merry Christmas”? What are your thoughts?

It might not be immediately apparent, but Jesus’ words to His followers in the Upper Room actually have some bearing on this debate. Read John 15:18-16:4.

What does Jesus say about how “the world” in general responded to Him?

Why did the world react this way?

What does Jesus tell His followers that they can expect from those who *are not* His followers?

What reason does He offer for why they (and we ourselves) will get such a response?

What bearing do you think this has on the “seasonal debate” about Christmas greetings?

What difference does this make?

It is almost as if we think that because we live in America, people should “appreciate” the real reason for the season. But, given what Jesus says here, is it all that surprising that many don’t want to acknowledge Christ’s rightful place in Christmas? How do you think Jesus’ words here could shape the way you interact with others this Christmas season?