

A NEW CHRISTMAS STORY

WHAT STORY DO YOU WANT TO BE TELLING?

DEC 2018 | RICHARD LUNDIE

Every year it catches me by surprise. Seemingly out of nowhere, the shops start putting up Christmas decorations. Advertising through every medium will start coming, convincing me that I need something, that my family will only be happy if we have this, or experience that. Then the Christmas songs will start, most of which have a focus on the season, not the reason for the season.

For many people, the Christmas season has a familiar story. Each year, we find comfort (and, for some, discomfort) in doing the same things that we did last year. Some of these things bring good memories, whilst others bring a dark cloud of memories. Whether it is the way we use Christmas decorations, the food we prepare, the gifts we buy, the family we connect with, games we play and spiritual practices we engage to prepare our hearts for Christmas day, we all have a Christmas season story.

This year, however, I have been challenged to begin writing a new Christmas season story with my family. Rather than doing what we have always done, I have been convicted to ask the provocative question: *how would King Jesus want us to celebrate his birthday?* I recognize that some of our Christmas practices have more to do with upholding a cultural understanding of Christmas and do not actively seek to engage my faith in my context.

Now, at this point, I would encourage you to read Luke 2. Read through this text a few times. In God's grand redemption plan from creation, he could have chosen a myriad of options for his Son to step into the human story in human form. Yet, all the people in the story, all the locations all the timing was pre-ordained. Nothing here was a mistake or unforeseen. Consider, then, what story was God writing around the human birth of his Son. How could your Christmas season story be more informed and shaped by the real Christmas story? This is what I want to do this December.

What if we Reimagine Christmas? What if we take a sober look at what we do and the big why behind it and choose to start doing new things this season? What if we tweaked existing things to bring a more Christ-centered focus? What if we dialed some practices back, so that deeper values can shine brighter? What if we chose to write a new Christmas season story for ourselves this year.

Now, this isn't about making Christmas a dull, boring season. All over scripture we see how feasting, celebrating and resting are good things. This isn't about having a guilty December. Instead, it is about writing a new Christmas story. It is about bringing King Jesus into our season planning. In our

wonderfully diverse city and country, this will lead to a range of beautiful cultural experiences of Christmas.

How sad is it that December is, at the same time, both 'silly season' and advent? How can you – as an individual in a family, in a community, keep it a sacred *and* celebratory season? One way is to examine what values you want to hold to during this season. What are things that you want to describe about your December time, when you look back in January? For me, I want to be more intentional. I want to make memories together as a family, I want to have intentional time together. I don't want to cram every day full of many different things – I want to do it well – like a lazy picnic in the forest with the family. I want to be intentional about talking about Jesus with my children, so that Christmas is not about the presents, but the presence of the King with us. I am trusting that being intentional in this way will help to say no to things that can drain time but are typically low in fun and fruitfulness (read: walking from shop to shop). How do you want to describe your December season?

To reimagine Christmas, we are not just talking about 'doing it better'. No, what we are talking about is looking to the person whose birthday we are celebrating. Considering the first Christmas, I am moved to see his story, his nature and his work shape what I prioritize this season. Lift your eyes above Christmas day – with all the things that go on to make it a 'success'. Focus on Jesus. Ask him what you can be doing to better celebrate his birth. Examine who you engage with at Christmas time. Examine how your money is spent and your generosity levels to those outside your immediate family. If you have holidays, think through how you spend your time. How can it be well utilized to be a blessing to others?

As you reimagine Christmas, it becomes a more life-giving season – for you and for others. As you engage with the God who took on flesh in order to bring life to others, you will experience more life.

What Christmas season story do you want to be telling?



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