

CELEBRATING HIS BIRTHDAY LIKE HE'S WITH US

What kind of celebration would be most honouring and glorifying to Jesus?

DEC 2018 | CHRISTINE MARTIN VAN WYK

This year I celebrated a milestone birthday and with that came a fair amount of reflection. To party or not to party? If I have a party who do I invite? What would I serve to the guests and what kind of presents would I love to receive? Naturally, this led to conversations with friends and colleagues about how they do birthdays in their families and why. I found myself freshly reminded that celebrating looks different across cultural and economic lines. Where would I host my party? What could I afford to serve to guests? What would I feel comfortable asking for as far as gifts go?

After my birthday, I started thinking about how Jesus might ask us to celebrate His birthday. Just as I had been able to define the parameters of celebrating my milestone, I wondered what kind of celebration Jesus would find most honoring and glorifying. Questions like this are easy to overlook; summer arrives, decorations go up and a kind of joyful expectation simmers. While traditions trigger nostalgia and deepen relationships, they also mean that we do things without thinking much about them-like all the stuffing in meat, why are we only eating that once a year? It's so delicious, surely it should be eaten all year round?!

Let me be totally honest, the decorations in my apartment stay up until the end of January. I bake more at Christmas time than the rest of the year combined. My husband's Advent calendar is already on the hook behind the front door. I say these things because I realize that when I ask you to consider doing Christmas differently- you might feel like I'm suggesting we take the fun out of an extraordinary, celebratory moment in the Christian calendar. And that is the furthest thing from my truest intentions. The older I get, the more I love Christmas- for all kinds of reasons, nieces and nephews chief among them. But celebrating the arrival of a world-saving Messiah trumps even the sweetest family moments. Prophecies were fulfilled. The Word became flesh. Immanuel, God with us.

Back to the question though, of celebrating Jesus' birthday in a way that He would find pleasing and glorifying.

I think He'd be disappointed with some of the stuff we get up to if I'm perfectly honest. Would the King of Kings be delighted by the amount of time we spend traipsing around shops, lamenting how

much more others are able to spend and generally existing in a pretty self-centered (or maybe tribe-centered) bubble for most of December and January?

We give gifts to those closest to us, spend time eeking every last cent of overdrafts on decorations and food that is very nice, but far from necessary- and the worst part, we don't notice the broken, hurting or just plain hardworking people around us. Shop attendants and car guards, waitrons and civil servants – all of whom we couldn't do without, fade into the background while we seek to serve ourselves the nicest slice of the Christmas pie.

Now, I'll say it again, in case you're skim-reading, this isn't about forcing anyone to choose between doing Christmas or not doing Christmas. Instead, it's about how to go through the Christmas season in a way that is closer to what King Jesus would ask of us. If this feels quite overwhelming, the idea of changing how you 'do' Christmas, I'd encourage you to choose just one or two things to do differently this year- and make further changes next year. Ultimately, our hope is that this Christmas will be packed with more meaningful fun, festivity and compassion than ever before and that Jesus would be glorified and honoured in the way we celebrate.



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