

a christmas story

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The holidays are frequently depicted, imagined and talked about as a time of peace, joy, and love but how often is that story one we actually experience? With the hustle and bustle of the holidays, isn't our story often one that looks more like a time filled with stress, short-temperedness, anxiety, loneliness, and materialism? Why are these two stories so different, and what can we do to change our story to look more like the one Christ created? He came to bring us hope and peace. He came to show us how to love each other, and finally to show how much God loves us. This is a Christmas story worth sharing.

week one: picture perfect

We paint this picture during the holidays of the perfect family gathered around the Christmas tree or dining room table laughing, loving, and enjoying each other but how often is this story actually true in our lives? Why are we often the least kind, least loving, least forgiving, least patient with those closest to us? What can we do to change this story? How do we make this a better story? To make it apart of the one Jesus wants to tell?

scripture

Romans 12:9-10

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

John 13:35

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

questions

1. How often do you get along with your family?
2. Who in your family do you have the most conflict with, and why?
3. What do they do that is the most frustrating to you?
4. What do you do that you think is the most frustrating to them?
5. Why do you think we are often the least kind, patient, understanding, loving to our families?
6. What can you do this week to treat your family better?

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week two: christmas spirit

Have you noticed how people tend to change during the holidays? Strangers often act friendlier, and in turn we are often more kind to strangers during this time of year. Why does that happen? Why do we change how we treat others as the Christmas season approaches? What does it say about who we are that we act extra nice only when “Santa’s watching”? What would this world look like if we acted this way towards everyone, all the time? What would happen if the “spirit of Christmas” looked no different than our Christian spirit?

scripture

1 John 3:16-18

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

Matthew 5:13-16

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot. “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

questions

1. How have you noticed people becoming friendlier during the holidays?
2. Why do you think we do this?
3. Should we act this way all year?
4. What do you think the bible says about how we should treat others? What do you think?
5. What would this world look like if everyday we acted in this manner? Is this even realistic?
6. What can you do to start acting more like this in the next week?

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week three: gift wrapped.....

How many of you love giving and receiving gifts? Does gift giving ever get stressful, worrying about what to get everyone in your life? How often do you get gifts that you don't use, don't like, and don't want? How nice would it be to only give and receive gifts that you knew they would love, or that you would love? What would it look like if what we gave were things that couldn't be bought, or replaced? How would your Christmas story change if you were the gift you gave? If you gave your time, your presence, your friendship, your kind words, your support and your love?

scripture

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Matthew 6:19-21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

questions

1. Have you ever received a really bad gift? What was it?
2. Can you remember what you received for Christmas 3 years ago?
3. Can you remember a specific time you spent with your family or friends 3 years ago? Maybe a vacation, or trip, or fun moment.
4. Why do we often remember the time we spend with those we love more than the gifts we receive?
5. What do you think would happen if we started to give each other more of our time, our love, and ourselves?
6. Who in your life do you think would really appreciate that gift? Your parents, friends, siblings, grandparents?
7. What are some ways you can give more of yourself to others this Christmas?