

Solution for Life



Volume 17 Issue 4
Christmas 2020



As we find ourselves once again in the holiday season, we pray that this year the meaning of Christmas will fill you with hope. Jesus came to save and provide a way to live in peace on earth. How? By being with us even when life is complicated. Matthew 1:23, "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). Take some time this season to meditate on God's precious gift, "God with us," who took the form of a baby and entered the world through the birth canal of a young teenage girl after growing in her womb for nine months. What great love for Jesus to leave heaven to make a way for us to have hope on earth and live with Him for eternity. "Joy to the World the Lord has Come."

Blessings, Jessie

Giving and Receiving | by Daniel Westlund

I really love this time of the year. The leaves change and then fall. It's a time to give thanks as individuals and as a nation for all the blessings we have received from our Heavenly Father. And then it seems that before we even take a breath, Christmas arrives and giving and receiving take place over the entire world.

I remember one Christmas, when I was about 8 years old, I had worked and saved \$10.00, enough to buy a Christmas gift for everyone in my family. I made my budget and began to shop. The one gift I remember, even to this day, was the gift I gave to my mother. I bought it at the Spartans Department store not far from our home. I purchased two silk cover pillows for .99 cents each, 20% of my budget. My mom was so thankful and placed

them on her bed. I had great joy in giving this very special gift from my young eyes and so happy my mom received my gift with so much appreciation.

It is at Christmas we celebrate the greatest gift ever given, Christ our Savior. It is through Christ, His birth, His life, His crucifixion and resurrection from the dead, that the gift of the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of eternal life in Heaven with Christ can be received by all who "call upon His name." (Acts 2:21)

Many who have watched a football game have seen the sign "John 3:16" in the end zone on extra points or field goals. For Christians, this is a familiar verse. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." However, for

many, it is just a sign with a name and some numbers with no meaning as to its eternal implications of giving and receiving.

In Acts 20:35 we see "Jesus himself said: It is more blessed to give than to receive." And in Matthew 10:8 Jesus said to His disciples, "Freely you have received, freely give." We have received so much as believers and followers of Christ. This includes our salvation and the gift of eternal life, the gift and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The gift of God's peace, protection, presence in our life and His provision for everything we need. (I Peter 3:3-5, II Peter 1:3)

We have been given so much, what a privilege to give to others what God has given us, the truth about Christ and everyone's need to receive Christ as their

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personal Savior. Each Christmas, before we give and receive gifts as a family, I read the Christmas story, and each year I have taught our sons and now our grandchildren the reason for Christmas: to celebrate the birth of Christ, God's gift to give eternal life to everyone who receives Him as their personal Savior.

If you have never received Christ as your Savior, you can do it right now. First, acknowledge that you are a sinner. (Romans 3:23 – “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”) Next, believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord and that He died for your sins on the cross, was placed in a tomb and rose from the dead. (Romans 10:9 – “That you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”) Next, ask Christ to forgive you of your sins and invite Him into your life as your Savior and Lord.

If you have prayed this prayer, tell someone! You can email me at dan@solutionforlife.org. I will rejoice with you and with the angels in heaven. You have now received the great gift and can begin giving it to others.

Solution for growth

Christmas Traditions | by Stephen Westlund

Christmas in our house is all about tradition. In the days leading up to Christmas we ask “should we get a different tree this year?” Then we put up that old sorry looking tree because it is our tradition. We watch Elf, White Christmas, It's a Wonderful Life, and A Christmas Carol, each for at least the 15th time, because it is our tradition. We spend Christmas Eve with family and eat our modified Swedish Christmas dinner because it is tradition. After dinner, Dad reads the Christmas story, reminding us of Who Christmas is for and the gift God gave. Then we open presents... why? Because we love to exchange gifts and because it is tradition.

This year, because of the events of 2020, our family vacation was cancelled. It was going to be our last big family vacation before my oldest went off to college. We decided to take one last vacation over Christmas break. We will be checking in at our destination on December 26th. To get an early start on vacation, I asked my youngest child, “what if we did Christmas morning on December 24th, then headed over to Grandma's for Christmas Eve dinner? Then we would get up on Christmas Day and start our road trip.” Logically, I thought, this makes the traveling much easier.

My youngest was appalled! He said, “No, we go to Grandma's on Christmas Eve, and we have Christmas morning at home!” Well, it was clear to me there was no need to discuss this any further. There was no way I was going to violate our sacred tradition.

The Bible speaks about traditions mostly in a good light. There was a tradition that when God did something big, the place where He did His work was often marked by a stone or by an altar to Him. And He gave His people this tradition:

Teach [the commands of God] to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates... (Deuteronomy 11:19-20)

The tradition God wants from us is that we make Him part of every fiber of our lives. He should consume our lives so much and in so many ways that whatever we do and wherever we go, we see Him in every part of our life and talk about what He is doing and give Him the glory for what He has done.

I wonder, have we, over time, lost this tradition of honoring God with the



Photo by Jessica Underwood

fiber of our lives and instead replaced it with, as First Peter says, an “empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors?” May it not be so!

This Christmas, I will watch my favorite movies, and we will enjoy all of our family traditions. With the events of 2020, I expect these family traditions will take on even greater meaning. But when I enjoy my traditions, I will be careful. I do not want to simply live an empty way of life. I want a life that is full; I want a life that is overflowing. And only Jesus gives such a life. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10)

We celebrate Christmas not because of our traditions. We celebrate Christmas because of Christ! He came, He was given. He is God's greatest gift to us. This Christmas season, let us remember Who Jesus is. Yes, He was born a little babe in a manger, but He is the Lord of all creation, the King of kings. May we honor and glorify Him, not because of tradition, but because He alone is worthy.

Merry Christmas!

Christmas | by Kristen Alewine

Christmas. I feel confused about Christmas every year. It seems sort of bipolar, like two different holidays trying to smash themselves into one and leaving me exhausted in the effort to combine.

On the one hand, we have Mary and Joseph, baby Jesus, the angels, the shepherds, and the beginning of the greatest turning point in the history of mankind. The point of Christmas is to REMEMBER these things, because we so easily forget and get distracted by responsibilities, plans, and an overabundance of stuff.

On the other hand, we have, well... responsibilities, plans, and an overabundance of stuff. All the shopping and trying desperately not

to go overbudget while wanting to get everyone the perfect gift. All the coordinating of schedules and hurt feelings when everyone can't be at all the things. Cramming all of our "vacation" time fuller than our regular work days. It's exhausting, mentally and physically. By the time Christmas is over, I'm ready for an actual vacation.

Some years there's part of me that wants to say, "That's it! No presents, no traveling, no extra, we're all just going to sit here and sing hymns and be thankful for what we already have. THANKFUL, people!" Think it would work? Yeah, I don't either.

So this year, I'm going for a mindset switch. I want to keep reminding

myself WHY we give all the gifts and make all the special food and see all the special people. Because there is good in all those things. And if we let them, they can all be useful tools to remind us of the bigger, truer things. We give gifts to each other because God gave us the very best gift – His Son. We create elaborate meals because that's one of the things God has always had His people do to help them remember and celebrate what He has done for them. And we spend time with our closest people because we need each other in order to stay hopeful, and to remind each other of the truth – that everything we need to fully live has already been given to us. All the Christmas extras are just the overflow.

Solution for caring

Loving | by Jessie A. Westlund

The King will reply, 'truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25:40 NIV

As a young child, my mother and father impressed on me the joy of loving and caring for others. When I was 6, I remember making cookies with my mother. These cookies were for the teens in our church to take with them caroling and deliver to those who were isolated in their homes. Afterward, the teens came to our home for hot chocolate and treats. I wanted so much to be part of the group, but I was too young. I would stay awake in my bed and wait until they returned from caroling. Then I would sneak to the top of the steps and listen to the kids celebrating downstairs. Finally, my day came and, to this day, I love taking treats to people and loving them all year long.

Christmas was not just one day in our home. All year Mom would find ways for us to love others. Sometimes we would take food to those who didn't have enough, take clothing to those who were in need, bring Easter baskets

to children without. When someone lost a loved one, Dad would take me to visit them. The key to these visits was not only the goodies we shared but the love and often a card or booklet we brought expressing the love of Jesus and His presence. As we left, Dad always prayed for comfort and the presence of Jesus. I grew up knowing that happiness is when we love others like Jesus loved others.

In some ways, COVID has limited basic ways of caring for others. This Christmas, may we be encouraged in His love. Also, there are many isolated people in our world dealing with COVID. Why not share His love with a card or treat of some kind, telling them Jesus loves them? Masks and social distancing do not need to limit loving. When we love those in need, we love Christ.



Solution for the future

Watch and Pray | by Daniel Westlund

In the book of Isaiah, we find a verse that covers all of prophecy from the beginning to the end. "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." (Isaiah 46:10). I have now been a student of prophecy for almost 50 years and even as a young child had unusual experiences along with dreams and visions. I have learned that "ours is to discover what God has revealed."

In the Bible, we have been given a picture of time from the beginning to the end. Many prophetic events have been fulfilled and this should give confidence to followers of Christ that prophecies still unfulfilled will be as God has revealed. In the Middle East, the process to bring peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors will continue to be negotiated, creating

a false peace and conflict. Yet the follower of Christ knows this must take place, just as the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948, the taking of Jerusalem in the 1967 six-day war and the declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital in 2018 by Trump.

Those that know Christ, and even some who do not know Him personally as their Savior and Lord, want to know what is going to happen. I know with confidence that those "who stand firm to the end will be saved. And the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) I also know with confidence that near the time of Christ's return there will be a departure from the truth revealed to us in Christ and the antichrist who "will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is

called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God." (II Thessalonians 2:4) This individual will be possessed by Satan, just as Judas was when he betrayed Christ. (John 13:27) The question for many relates to God's temple. Is it the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem or is it the temple represented by the visible church? We need to remember that Jesus told the Jews when they demanded a sign, and asked by what authority Jesus threw the money exchangers out of temple courts, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." (John 2:19)

"When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Luke 21:28

Bulletin Board

Tell Us Your 2020 Story

It's been a year of constant change and, now more than ever, we recognize we need God's presence in our lives. Everyone has a story of how their lives have been impacted by the 2020 changes. We would love to hear from you on how you have experienced God work in your life over the last 10 months of radical change. How has God been with you this year?

For example, a few months ago we received one of our newsletters, returned to us with a forwarding address on the envelope. It was for a special lady who lost her husband suddenly. It was about the time of the storms in Iowa. Solution for Life sent a check to assist in her work through the changes related to her husband's

death. Little did we know she had moved right to where the storm hit in Iowa and she had lost all her electricity. We got a letter from her telling us she lost all her food in the storm and the check came just as she needed to replace what was lost. God is so good.

Enclosed is a journal sheet for your 2020 story. Write or email us your story of how God has been present in your life. As we face 2021, we want to focus on Jesus and His presence in our lives. Sharing God's love and presence are always ways to encourage one another. With your permission, we would share with others anonymously how Christ is moving and encouraging individuals as we trust in Him. We look forward to hearing from you.

Message from Dan & Jessie

We have prayed for those this newsletter touches. We want to encourage you, Jesus is not frantic with the events of 2020. He loves us and will take care of His children. Psalm 91 has been an encouragement to us because it is filled with promises for us. Please read it and trust Him for His covering over you. We leave this scripture for you as you celebrate Jesus this Christmas. "**Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.**" Ephesians 3:20 NIV

Blessings this Christmas,
Dan and Jessie Westlund



Tell Your 2020 Story

As we face 2021 it would be wonderful to share with each other the ways God was present in our lives, lessons learned and observed through all the difficulties in 2020.

Would you consider sharing your story? As we face 2021 we think it would be wonderful to create a scrapbook with a collection of our experiences. We plan to print them and use them to encourage one another in such as a time as this.

When you have your story ready, please give us your name, a title for your story (if you can think of one) and the story itself. If you would prefer to remain anonymous just let us know.

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We look forward to hearing from you.

Dan and Jessie

