

Dear God | Why Christmas? Part 2 | Discussion Guide - Hebrews 5:7-9; 4:14-16

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Hebrews 4:15-16 (NLT) This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. 16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

God Became... He became us - His own *Creation*. He became *Righteousness*, then He became *Sin*. He went on to become *Sacrifice* and ultimately *Life*. It is wonderful and too much to comprehend. And, it only has meaning for us. The Angels and other creatures of this planet were not granted such a treasure. ONLY US. So... **Merry Christmas**. How does it feel to have been given the BEST GIFT EVER?!

Isn't the Incarnation of Christ kind of... Scandalous?

1 John 4:9 (NLT) *God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.*

The idea that God became a Man (Jesus Christ), has not always been popular. There was a time when the thought of God actually becoming human was repulsive. How could a being so holy, pure, and blameless become a man? Therein lies the scandal. The concern was that people are so broken that it would be far beyond the Holy One to consider such a possibility. The messiness and chaos of birth alone would seem to prohibit such an act. After all, how could God actually go through such a humiliation?

This is the significance of the Incarnation (Jesus becoming a man). *It is to this world that the Lord of glory came. It is precisely this life into which He has so thoroughly thrust God's own self, grasping tenaciously onto us and our lives. Promising never to let go.*

Is the Incarnation of Christ... Essential?

1 John 5:20 NLT *And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.*

The Incarnation is Essential to my Comprehension of God. John once made the declaration, "No one has ever seen God..." **John 1:18 NLT**. We do not need to be convinced of this. How many tragedies, sufferings, despairs, illnesses, major setbacks or disappointments have we endured? And in all of those moments we long "see" God at work. We hunger for His attention or care.

This is why the Incarnation is essential. Jesus is the God we are able to comprehend. The God we can "see" and hear. He speaks and reveals God's thoughts toward us.

The Incarnation is Essential to my Understanding of Identity. Jesus demonstrates God as one who understands us. (**Psalms 139**). It is a magnificent experience to "Know God". But, that experience is predicated upon BEING KNOWN by Him. He knows us and continues to pursue us

Jesus once asked the Disciples a question, "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away, what will he do?". I am pretty sure I would have flunked that quiz because Jesus is shocking. "Won't he leave the ninety-nine others on the hills and go out to search for the one that is lost?" ...Matthew 18:12 NLT. This quick story does so much to teach us who we are to God. We are the ones He is after! We are the ones He loves and Pursues!

The Incarnation is Essential to my Understanding of Right. We would not know right and wrong were it not for Jesus. Religion can be cruel, and is often more about control than hope. It certainly was in Jesus' day. But Jesus came to show us the way. He came to demonstrate the look and life of real Love.

Is the Incarnation of Christ ...a Precedent?

John 20:21 (NLT) ...*As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.*"

Jesus was a Man on a Mission... He didn't come to establish feasts, holidays and three day weekends. He came to save us. So, if You're following Jesus... *Welcome to the Missional Life.*

A Missional Life is contextual and crosses barriers. Jesus came on a rescue mission. A person did not have to *become* a Jew, Greek, European, or American in order to follow Jesus. Nor did it matter *who* was drowning. It only mattered *that* they were drowning for Him to overcome all obstacles on their behalf.

A Missional Life is Humble. No one deserves this kind of mercy. Jesus once told us "Blessed are the poor in spirit." He meant that those who knew Him would be greatly humbled by the goodness extended toward them.

A Missional Life is Devoted to Christ's Church. I am not arguing for the support of denominations or non-profit entities, but rather for the investment in family. Jesus loves the Church. He died for her. And, since every believer is the church, we shouldn't be so critical of her. Rather, we should work together for Jesus' purposes in and through the Church. And lastly...

A Missional Life is Global. The story we started today took place in a very small town in Israel. That story has made it around the world. We should make sure the trend continues.

So... Merry Christmas!!! You have received the greatest Gift. Why not share the Gift?

Discussion:

- Review **Hebrews 5:7-9; 4:14-16**. What do you think about these Scriptures? What comes to mind as you read them? How do they inform your prayer life?
- List some of the "scandalous" relationships in the Bible. Review **1 John 4:9-10**. How is God's Love "Scandalous"?
- Review **1 John 5:20**. How does Jesus' birth and life help us comprehend God more fully?
- Review **Psalms 139:1,5-6**. How well does God know you? What do you think about that? Does it give you comfort or cause anxiety? Why?
- Do you find **Matthew 18:12-13** surprising? Why or Why not?
- Discuss the Christian life as a *missional* life. What does it mean to be a missionary?
- Did anything stand out in your reading today that you could share with someone else?
- Write a personal action step based on this conversation. (*What will you do about it?*)