

# THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS

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## The Heart of Christmas is Love

**Galatians 4:4-5 // Ephesians 1:3-14 // 1 Corinthians 13:1-13**

*4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons .*

~ Galatians 4: 4-5 ~

Jesus came into the world at just the right time. He came to free us from the crushing weight of the law. We could never be good enough to earn salvation, so Jesus lived a perfect life on our behalf. Why? Because of love. God wanted us to be a part of His family. Out of love, he adopted us through the work of Christ. We are now the sons and daughters of God. Jesus is our brother, and we can rest in the love of the Father.

**Think:** No love compares to the love of the Father God.

**Feel:** I don't have to work to be good enough to receive God's love. It is already mine in Jesus.

**Do:** Stop striving to gain God's approval. You are invited into His family by His grace and love. Share His love with others around you.

We have been on a journey to discover the heart of Christmas. Often, we get lost in all the gifts, decorations, and parties and miss the central focus of the Christmas season. Jesus was born to bring hope, peace, joy, and love, which is the real reason for Christmas. In the first week, we learned that we are offered hope in the middle of our circumstances because of God's faithfulness. In the second week, we looked at the wonderful gift of peace that Jesus's sacrifice made available to us. Christ makes us right with God, ourselves, and others. Last week we learned that joy is ours no matter the circumstances because God dwells with us. This lesson will look at a theme within the scriptures that genuinely holds all of it together. At the heart of Christmas is the great love of God for every one of us.

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas Day with friends and family, there will most assuredly be a gift that you have to figure out how to respond to without hurting someone's feelings or feeling foolish. But there is one gift that will not require such a response. It is the greatest gift ever given to us, and Christmas is when it was presented. When God sent His son to be born, it expressed His unending and relentless love. His love is a

thoughtful gift because it meets our greatest need—our sinful state. It is a priceless gift because it could never be purchased apart from Christ's blood. It is a timeless gift because God's grace is never-ending. Above all else, at the heart of Christmas is love.

### POINT #1 - GOD'S GIFT WAS RIGHT ON TIME

Have you ever received a present from someone and you could not believe how perfect the timing was? Maybe because of something you were going through or a need that was met, it was as if the giver knew just what your heart wanted.

The book of Galatians talks about the timing of Christmas as Paul wrote to the church in Galatia.

**Read Galatians 4:4-5.** From the moment creation was broken by sin, God began to unfurl a plan to restore and rescue all He had made. The Bible is an account of His divine efforts and faithfulness to reverse the effects of the Fall. Motivated by love, God partners with those who love and trust Him to enact the most incredible rescue plan in history. Paul wrote that when Jesus came and was born to Mary, the fullness of time had



come. It was the right moment in history to send His son to make a way for the world to be restored. Because of love, God was not content to sit back and watch His creation suffer forever. He went to great lengths to be with us and make us a part of His family again.

What is perhaps most amazing is that when Jesus came, he came to meet us exactly where we are. He was born under the law of God to redeem humankind, which is under the expectations of God's law. In doing so, His perfect life met the requirements of the law. Where we fail, Jesus is successful.

#### Discussion Question:

✝ What kind of effect should God's love have on us?

#### POINT #2 – WE ARE LOVED INTO THE FAMILY

According to Galatians 4, the full expression of God's love is demonstrated in our spiritual adoption. We become children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ. We are given all the privileges of sonship and daughtership with God as our Father.

Many of us live our lives every day without realizing that God loves us. When we miss the fact that we have been adopted into His family, we have a hard time loving ourselves. In turn, we have a hard time loving others who are also valued and treasured by God. This aspect of Christmas should not be missed or avoided because it is central to living the full lives that God wants for us.

In the book of Ephesians, Paul describes all the benefits of being in God's family and receiving His love.

**Read Ephesians 1:3-14.** As a part of God's family, we are made blameless in God's sight (vs. 4). His love washes away our sins. God's will and way are made known to us as a father might share with a child (vs. 9). We are chosen to receive hope and salvation (vs. 13). We are marked with a seal to ensure that the Spirit of God fills us and will inherit eternal life as one of God's precious possessions (vs. 14). All of this is only made possible by the arrival of Jesus at just the right time to one day sacrificially give His life on a cross to validate God's amazing love for us.

#### Discussion Questions:

✝ Why do you think Paul uses the imagery of a family to communicate how God feels about you?

✝ What benefit of being in God's family listed in Ephesians 1:3-14 is most exciting and encouraging to you? Why?

#### POINT #3 – LOVE FREELY RECEIVED IS LOVE FREELY GIVEN

Love must be at the heart of Christmas because if we miss this being the central message of the season amid the lights and presents, we may never receive it for ourselves. Perhaps the most tragic thing about this oversight is that we often give the kind of love we perceive to be ours. If we have not experienced the grace of God, it is difficult to offer the grace of God. If we do not know the compassion of God, it is difficult to express the compassion of God. But when we recognize the

kind of love that God has for us, it becomes how we treat others around us.

The most famous Bible passage about love, 1 Corinthians 13, helps us understand God's feelings toward us and how we should feel about our spouse, children, friends, and neighbors.

**Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.** We can get caught up in all kinds of things, even good things, and miss the whole point if love is not our motivating factor. Love like we have been given from God should cause us to be patient and kind to one another. It should cause us to avoid being envious of one another or proud. Love drives us to honor others and to keep a cool head. Love is present when we avoid evil and rejoice with good. Does this sound like the love you have received from God? Does it sound like the love you display in your life.

The way this passage might sound during Christmas would be like this:

*"If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights, and shiny ornaments but do not have love, I'm just another decorator. If I work hard in the kitchen baking Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals, and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime but do not have love, I'm just another cook. If I work at a soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home, and give all that I have to charity but do not have love, it profits me nothing. If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties, and sing in the choir's cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point. Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the spouse. Love is kind even when harried and tired. Love does not envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens. Love does not yell at the kids to get out of the way but is thankful they are there to be in the way. Love does not give only to those who are able to give in return but rejoices in giving to those who cannot. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails."*

#### Discussion Questions:

✝ What is one practical way to share God's love with someone else this week?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, This Christmas, we come before You with grateful hearts, recognizing the arrival of Jesus as the ultimate gift—Your perfect expression of love and grace to the world. Lord, we humbly receive this gift, knowing there is no greater response than to open our hearts to You. May the love we receive through Jesus fill our lives completely, transforming us to live out that love every day of the year. Guide us to reflect Your kindness, compassion, and truth in all we do, so that others may also see and feel Your boundless love. In Jesus' holy name, we pray. Amen..