

How to Have a Missional Christmas

Living for Christ means dying to self, correct? That is such a bold statement I sometimes struggle to see the daily, simple areas I'm able to sacrifice what matters to me in order to magnify God.

The day before Thanksgiving I was in the crowded grocery store—alone, with my very energetic children. I was irritable and distracted. I ran into a friend from church who smiled at me and tried to give me the cordial, “How are you?” conversation exchange.

I felt rude but I could barely say hi when my mind was racing with, “Pait, sit still. Butter, eggs. Where's Jax? Milk, cheese. Pait, don't do that. Yogurt. Jax, stay with me. Biscuits. Pait, come back.” I was hoping to leave the store keeping my sanity intact and without causing harm to a child.

Toward the end of this horrible outing, the Lord drew my attention to an elderly lady who appeared sad. My buggy was filled with food to feed my precious family on Thanksgiving, and she had a buggy with only a few items. Ramen noodles and some canned goods.

I cannot tell you where this woman was in life, and I do not know what her Thanksgiving plans were, but the Lord used her in that moment to break my impatient heart. She looked lonely. I felt guilty, because I had no idea how I could show her the **love of Christ**.

I don't believe it was that specific lady the Lord was breaking my heart over. He took that circumstance to break my heart over how I live. I had nothing to give her, because I live for me and my family, taking care of our needs and not intentionally looking for the needs of others around me.

The Bible says for us to be ready “in season and out of season” with the gospel (2 Tim. 4:2). Yes, I could have stopped her in the aisle and shared with her the full plan of salvation, but the moment didn’t call for that. To reach her, I needed to lay down a part of me. For my life to impact this city for Christ, I need to lay down a part of me. Because the impact needed is impossible apart from God. Our simple sacrifices are prayers, inviting God to do what only He can do.

After telling my husband my heart, we began looking at our grocery and miscellaneous budget and I thought, “What would God do if I surrendered my hair products to Him and bought generic ones instead? What if I surrendered the cheese that is just an add-on to a recipe? What if I surrendered those cute seasonal hand towels to the Lord?”

These things are not bad, but if I am going to have extra money, this is where it would have to come from.

Sacrifices to God are never in vain. His blessing it goes far beyond what we’re able to see. Remember the story about a small boy who entrusted Jesus with His only fish and bread? That’s what I’m trusting God to do with my favorite hair care products.

We decided to cut back on our expenses and buy grocery gift cards with the leftover money. My hope is to keep one in my wallet at all times. Everywhere I go, I pray for the Lord to open my eyes to the needs around me and for the recipient of the card. I pray for Him to show me where He is at work and burden my heart for whoever needs this card.

Since doing this, the Lord has allowed me to anonymously pay for the groceries in the cart of a mom in line behind me. The other cards, I’m unsure how God will use them. They were given out where He was leading—by leaving a quickly scribbled note saying “Merry Christmas” from my church or from the citywide women’s ministry I work with. I will never know their impact, and I’m OK with that. These cards have been prayed over, and I trust these small sacrifices in the hands of my Savior.

*Reprinted with permission from Missional Women. **Melissa Bradley** is married with two small children. She is a co-founder of a citywide women's ministry, The Well. She currently serves and assists in various churches around her community. You can also find Melissa at .*