

How to Make 2019 a Hallmark Year of Kingdom Advancement

It seems the whole world is drawn to celebrations of some sort at this season of the year.

As I wrote recently, our Jewish friends have just celebrated the eight days of Hanukkah; some even featured Hanukkah trees and distinctive blue and white decorations.

Although Christmas is a Christian celebration, merchants of all religious backgrounds market their merchandise with great zeal and even discounted sales. Often the results become the majority of their cash flow for the whole year!

The reason?

My wife and I have an outdoor banner, which I hang each Christmas season. It simply says: "JESUS—Celebrate the Reason!

The reason for celebrating Christmas is because Father God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, in order that whoever believes in and fully relies on Him to meet the righteous and just requirements of Father God may have both forgiveness and the promise of eternal life (John 3:16).

Jesus is the reason for the season! We celebrate because He has made a way of righteous reconciliation with us and the one true God of heaven and earth. All we need to do is wholeheartedly believe and receive.

The media seem politically motivated.

The secular media continue their preoccupation with wars and terrorism, gender identity and gun-control, along with global warming and a predicted financial meltdown. The media also seem hypercritically-consumed with political issues centered on President Trump and his family.

Jesus promises victory and blessing!

By faith, believers declare that Jesus will provide all our needs so we can perform His kingdom's purposes. We are saved to serve and be His hands extended.

Jesus commissioned His followers to make disciples by proclaiming the Good News of His kingdom and teaching believers to observe all that He had commanded. He promised the constant presence and enabling power of the Holy Spirit as they went on their divinely commanded mission.

This end-of-year-celebration season is also an opportunity for generous giving to others and to effective kingdom-fulfilling ministries. Appeals come in daily from worthy contacts we may have had in years past. Biblical stewardship requires us to faithfully review and discerningly evaluate these current appeals and then make as generous of a contribution as we are able and directed by the Holy Spirit.

Christmas is a time for giving. It is a time for generosity and reciprocity. We are blessed to be a blessing.

Blessed to be a blessing!

I'm asking God to direct my charitable giving during these days, especially to those ministries and servants where He has given my wife and me unique relationships and/or spiritual burden. As I give to them, I ask God to protect and provide for their families, ministries and for additional financial partners, so these ministries may excel and expand.

I also pray for God to give them a great sense of holy joy in this special season. I pray they will receive great wisdom and insight, which will make 2019 a great year for kingdom advancement! Twelve months from now, we can review and rejoice over these victories.

As we unwrap and celebrate this Christmas season, let us

remember that "Jesus is the reason" and seek to glorify Him in all we say and do.

Merry Christmas!

*Ordained to the ministry in 1969, **Gary Curtis** is a graduate of LIFE Bible College at Los Angeles (soon to become Life Pacific University at San Dimas, California). He has taken graduate courses at Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois and Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. Gary served as part of the pastoral staff of The Church on The Way, the First Foursquare Church of Van Nuys, California, for 27 years (1988-2015), the last 13 years as the vice president of Life on The Way Communications Inc., the church's not-for-profit media outreach. Now retired, Gary and his wife have been married for 50 years and live in Southern California. They have two married daughters and five grandchildren.*