

Thomas McDaniel's Shares 2020 Version of 'My Grown-Up Christmas List'

2020 is a year to remember.

More than that, a year we will never forget.

We overused the word "unprecedented" in 2020, but it was on point.

Most of us will be glad to see 2020 go, but the question is, where are we headed?

The new year looks like more of the same chaos: The election is crazy. COVID-19 is going crazy, and many of us feel like we are going crazy.

We hope Christmas will bring some reprieve.

So, with Christmas near, I wanted to make a 2020 grown-up Christmas list. Here it is:

1. We emphasize politics less in 2021.

2020 is the year of political craziness.

"Politics" is the word of the '20s. Before the 2016 election, 82% of those polled said that the campaign made them feel "more disgusted" about American politics.

Today, when you ask Americans which institutions are "pushing people apart," they will list political parties to the most divisive.

2. The coronavirus is not political.

As a pastor, I have witnessed COVID-19 wreck the lives of

many. Our church has lost precious saints to the disease. My heart breaks as we argue over masks, business closings, and red and blue states.

People are dying—real people. We watch the evening news as they report the number of cases. The doubters talk about padded numbers. The unmaskers think the virus isn't real, and the rebellious don't care.

The numbers track those in the hospital and deaths. Those numbers are real. The people admitted to the hospital are a story of pain, disease and heartache of families.

The deaths speak volumes of pain and loss through the homes of someone who lost a mom, dad, sister, brother or loved one. That's real.

I wish my list could take it away, but it cannot.

3. We become more accepting of others.

We have lost our respect for those of different views. Can Muslims and Christians find a place of respect? Yes.

Can Black people and white people be close friends? Yes. Racism is not a "them" problem. It is an "us" problem. All ethnic groups are hurt and confused.

Can Republicans and Democrats go to the same church? Yes.

We need a change of heart. Change starts with me.

Life and a few people are working hard to divide and isolate us.

Let's remember, mercy triumphs over judgment.

4. We cancel "cancel culture."

In 2020 history has been wiped from our eyes and hidden under perceived opinion.

Cancel culture has taken to social media and canceled products and movements. Canceling things you don't like or disagree with is not healthy. There's no question we live in a divided world. For many years we have stood on different sides of political views, religion and historical events.

The issues have ignited violence, and threats of physical harm has become common. Many are afraid to voice or tweet their opinions. One tweet now has the potential to make you a public nemesis.

"Cancel culture has become a sort of a source of fear for many Americans where we live in a culture that you are somehow afraid that if you say the wrong thing that your life will be forever changed " says former presidential candidate Andrew Yang.

Cancel culture is not positive for America. It's just another way of removing our freedom of speech and erasing healthy debate.

5. Professional athletes focus on the sport.

I miss the days when sports were about sport. I realize athletes are people and have a voice. I also recognize that God has given these athletes a platform to speak out.

However, most Americans don't care to know what political party an athlete supports.

Yes, athletes have the right to stand up for issues, but to make the problems divisive is another story.

We miss the days of taking the kids to a professional game without hearing about or experiencing another political encounter.

6. Kobe Bryant is still here.

The death of Kobe Bryant was shocking. Bryant was an icon and

a profound athlete.

Here are some responses to his untimely death.

Lebron cried. Shaq cried. The world cried. Vanessa Bryant stood firm. I dare you to watch one of those videos and try not to shed a tear. ESPN shared a video tribute that concluded with a young Gianna Bryant looking up at her father presumably after one of his early NBA Championship victories. She looked up at him with awestruck eyes, a giant to her ... and to the world. Around the world, little kids wrote his name on the ground. They did it with crayons, pen, marker, whatever they could find. Teenagers are now tossing balled-up pieces of paper at a trash can and shouting "Kobe" instead of whispering it.

NBA legend Magic Johnson speaks about Kobe Bryant's legacy on and off the court in an emotional phone interview with CBS Los Angeles. "I thought he was going to live forever. I thought he was invincible."

Kobe was not invincible. It turns out that Kobe Bryant was an imperfect human being.

Kobe knew that more than we did.

That's what made him great.

7. Child sex trafficking is no more.

2020 is the year of heartbreak. Nothing breaks our hearts like kids being used as sex toys.

Child trafficking affects every country in the world, including the United States. Children make up 27% of all human trafficking victims worldwide, and 2 out of every 3 girls identify as a victim.

The average age of victims is 15 years old. The child is trafficked an average of 5.4 times a day. Some children have

sex with more than 30 partners in a week, and more than 100 times a month.

Let's pray fervent prayers for the victims and swift justice to the traffickers.

This wish (prayer) is big on my grown-up Christmas list.

The Song

Kelly Clarkson performed "My Grown-Up Christmas List" on *American Idol's* 2003 Christmas special, making the song popular once more on the radio. Previously, in 1992, Christian artist Amy Grant, who penned an additional verse to the song, earned the 1990 composition substantial airplay. And how could listeners not want to hear the message it carries, especially this Christmas season?

"No more lives torn apart/ That wars would never start/ And time would heal all hearts/ And everyone would have a friend/ And right would always win/ And love would never end/ This is my grown-up Christmas list." {eo}

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