

Discover How Christmas Is a Key to Experiencing Revival

This Christmas season, I have been flooded with new perspectives on the familiar Jesus-birth narrative. In fact, one of the great dangers of Christmas is to stop listening to the traditional story because we think we've figured it out for every angle. This approach illustrates a very serious spiritual condition that we must awaken to if we are going to see widespread, nation-shaking revival. We must be willing to embrace the movement of God, even if we don't have a theological framework for it ... yet.

I've stopped being content with Christmas as it's always been. Make no mistake, I still celebrate all of the traditions and festivities. I enjoy holiday movie marathons, where *Home Alone* and *Elf* don the yule-tide lineup. Christmas gifts, trees, parties, lights—I cherish all of it. I'm not one who thinks we need to throw the whole thing out, either because it's become overly contaminated by consumerism or because it has some kind of pagan roots. I don't care if it's the "world system" or some kind of Celtic history, we have the ability to redeem December 25 to honor Jesus Christ. (And no, I don't think He was literally born on that day, but I am not at all against selecting it as a day to celebrate His glorious incarnation!)

Here's the problem, though. It's easy for spiritual people to pick on the consumer side of Christmas, claiming that we need to focus on the true "Reason for the Season." 'Tis true, we do. Even in church circles, we have simply turned Christmas into a massive production with some spiritual trimmings here and there. Don't misunderstand me. I am not against the production, per se, but it should be supplemental to our primary priority—seeing Jesus exalted through the power of the Holy Spirit. I just know this looks very different than what we have always been used to with our Christmas cantatas, choir

programs, productions, plays, pageants, and candlelight services. Don't throw those things out unless they distract from people having genuine encounters with God during this glorious time.

If ever there was a supernatural season, where the eyes and ears of nations were bent towards the Messiah, it's during Christmastime. We need to steward this great opportunity, instead of giving people more reasons to become familiar with a spectacle. As people come across our paths in everyday life, or people flood into church sanctuaries on Christmas Eve, we need to remember Who we offer them. We don't offer a show; we carry the Spirit of the Risen Christ. He is truly the thrill of hope that brings a weary world to rejoice!

Do you want to know what can quench the Spirit's movement and kill revival before it even starts? Familiarity.

Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Son of God, was unable to perform mighty miracles in his hometown because He was recognized as the "son of Joseph and Mary" (see Mark 6:5). The people were familiar with Him at one level and thus, unwilling to embrace Him at another. They were comfortable with Jesus being the carpenter who was following in His natural father's footsteps, but they were not so keen on Him following in His true Father's footsteps. This reality of Jesus being the Son of God challenged the people's present level of revelation, calling them to embrace a new perspective of Jesus. Perhaps a more demanding perspective, as the son of Joseph doesn't have the authority to demand allegiance, but the Son of God most certainly does. They were unwilling to see Jesus in this light and thus, remained un-hungry to experience His supernatural healing power.

Are you receiving the same invitation this Christmas season? Could God be calling you to reconsider the familiar ... even starting with the Christmas story? This much I know. When you receive an upgraded revelation about Jesus, your level of

hunger increases. Why? You want to encounter the One you are being introduced to. Jesus was never meant to merely be known intellectually; He was meant to be known relationally and experientially.

The reason we are not seeing widespread revival has nothing to do with lack from God's end. This acknowledgement is not meant to incite shame. By no means. At the same time, it is a wake-up call. We need to forsake familiarity with Jesus and be willing to journey into the depths.

For many of us, that means embracing a willingness to let our childhood (and in some cases, childish) theology be challenged. You read that correctly. Just because we embrace a certain perspective on God, doesn't mean it is scripturally founded. At the same time, what we believe about God may be absolutely correct and true—but many of us settle at one level of truth, unwilling to embrace some of the more uncomfortable facts about God that the Bible also clarifies. The One who saves also heals, delivers, releases captives, performs miracles, raises the dead, demands lordship, and wants to flood the Earth with His glory! We may have a solid foundation in one area of God's nature, but there might be unexplored territories that are awaiting the hungry and the brave. Are you willing to take the journey?

None of this is a call to venture outside of established biblical parameters. Far be it! There is too great of an inheritance that Scripture claims is available that we are not fully walking in. This should not provoke shame, but incite hunger. Relentless hunger.

Consider the wise men level of spiritual hunger, which drove the three kings out of the palace, through the desert, and ultimately, to a feeding trough where the King of Glory was laid. Surely, that unique presentation of the King was offensive to their natural minds. These three men of nobility voyaged from an atmosphere of wealth, opulence and royalty to

behold Jesus in a manger, and yet, they were seeing the King who was infinitely superior to any and every ruler who would walk the Earth.

How did they respond? They embraced the move of God. They allowed heaven to adjust their theology correctly. Perhaps they had visions of wealth and riches ... but when they stumbled upon the manger, animals, shepherds and peasants, they had a choice to make. We have a choice to make as well.

Do we embrace the move of God, as is-mess and all-or do we dismiss it?

Do we write it off because it doesn't fit what we think it should look like?

After all, surely the great move of heaven to Earth, God to mankind, couldn't look like this ... could it?

The wise men's response should challenge all of us when it comes to embracing new depths of revelation and new expressions of God's movement. What their minds might not have been able to wrap around, their hearts were able to respond to with worship.

Remember, the King of Glory came in a seemingly common manner. The wise men could have been detoured by this; but they were not. They looked past what they thought they knew and allowed Heaven to adjust their thinking about the One lying in the manger.

So what's the gift the Holy Spirit wants to give to you this season? Upgraded revelation of Jesus that produces a greater experience with Jesus. How do you receive it? Break ties with familiarity and be willing to embrace the move of God—even when it comes in unpredictable, uncomfortable and inconvenient ways.

Father, break off familiarity in my life. I don't want to see Jesus in a common way and I don't want to go through the

motions of Christmas like I have in the past. I ask You, Holy Spirit, for fresh revelation this year. Help me to see the Christmas story in a brand new way—not the way I've always seen it and thought about it. You're calling me deeper. You desire to call me into the deep places and I ask that You would adjust me thinking according to Your Word and Your thinking. I understand that, in order to see and participate in revival, I need for heaven to change my thinking—just like the wise men. Lord, help me to see things from Your perspective. Show me where You are moving and help me to willingly and joyfully participate.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen!