

What This Pastor Learned From Canceling Christmas

Pastor Jon Weece witnessed the true meaning of Dec. 25 when he “canceled Christmas” at Southland Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky, a few years ago. With Christmas falling on a Sunday, Weece challenged his church to spend Christmas visiting and giving gifts to people they normally wouldn’t instead of coming to church.

“I challenged them to *be* the church that Sunday. Jesus came to us on earth in person. So what better way to capture the incarnation than to go to people in person?” said Weece.

His announcement did not come without national criticism; Weece received complaint emails from individuals in all 50 states. Still, what resulted was a number of life-changing stories of individuals living out abundant generosity—from an 8-year-old boy who earned and saved money to buy his friend an expensive coat so he would no longer be cold at the bus stop, to the family who not only gave a struggling college student money to pay off his student loans but also gave him their own car.

“The Bible tells us the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. That Christmas, we saw that to be true,” Weece said.

Weece shares this experience in chapter nine of his new book, *Jesus Prom: Life Gets Fun When You Love People Like God Does*.

With a dynamic foreword by Bob Goff, the *New York Times*’ best-selling author of *Love Does*, *Jesus Prom* challenges readers to start talking far less and acting much more. Each chapter explores a particular verb Jesus modeled—including love, be, see, talk, rest, turn, dance, give, go, remember and receive—to provide a plan for individuals and the collective church to start living out their faith.

“Jesus loved verbs, so wouldn’t it make sense that the people who follow Jesus would love the same verbs Jesus loved?” Weece said. “If we love the verbs Jesus loved, I’m convinced we will love the people He loves. That’s when life gets fun.”

Weece uses humorous personal stories woven together with real-life examples and biblical truth to provide practical steps to love like Jesus. Readers will be inspired by Weece’s creative examples of demonstrating Jesus’ actions—from his ritual of standing on the street corner to give out free hugs to his church’s annual Jesus Prom for individuals with mental and physical challenges.

“This isn’t a book full of facts and information, it’s a book full of stories. And Jon is one of the best storytellers I’ve heard,” said Goff in his foreword for *Jesus Prom*. “He tells beautiful stories about hope and grace and acceptance and forgiveness. He talks about the power of being present in people’s lives and the beauty of living a life of availability and inconvenience. This is a book about God’s tremendous love and accessibility to everybody—even if they don’t roll the way you roll.”