

Do You Need to Experience God in a New Way this Christmas?

Have you ever wanted to cancel Christmas? All the hustle, bustle, pressure and expectations can be overwhelming. If life is overwhelming already, feeling we must make everything perfect can deflate and defeat us.

The Stevens had a year like that. After months of fighting their son's cancer as a family, they had no energy left for grand celebrations. So, they did Christmas different. No presents, no tree, no Christmas cookies – just presence. They determined to be present in each other's lives and let God be present as well. The calm, the time to breath allowed them to encounter each other and the Lord in a new way.

I love celebrating Christmas. The twinkling lights, the decorated tree, the wrapped presents, the delicious food, extra time with family, all highlight for me the miracle of Christ's Incarnation. But sometimes a silent night looking at the stars can be profound too.

Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV) says, *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

Wonderful

For many of us Christmas is filled with the wonder of God, for He is **Wonderful**! The season from Thanksgiving to Christmas is a great time to recount who He is and how He has been wonderful to you!

Counselor

But there are times when we need to know Him more as our

Counselor. If you have a big decision ahead or are handling a tricky situation or relationship – He is your Counselor. James 1:5 says if we need wisdom, we can ask God, who will give it to us abundantly without any judgement. So, ask Him for wisdom. Sit in His presence and listen. He is the greatest Counselor you will ever encounter, and He will never steer you wrong.

Mighty God

When we are under attack, we need to experience Him as our **Mighty God**. If you feel under siege in some area of your life, it can be difficult to celebrate. Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV) tells us, *“The Lord our God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”* Call on Him in your distress and He will come to your aid. And He will do it joyfully, singing over you! Jeremiah 33:3 says he will even *“show you great and mighty things, which you did not know.”* If you need a Mighty God this Christmas, He is all that and so much more!

Everlasting Father

The word, father, evokes a myriad of emotions, some good and some not. Father can be a scary word for some, because our adversary the devil has used some father figures for evil. But our Everlasting Father is all together good. If you have lost a parent or have never known the goodness of a loving Father, maybe you need to encounter God as your **Everlasting Father** this year. James 1:17 (NIV) tells us that, *“every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”* Everything good you have ever received or experienced is from your Everlasting Father. And Jesus, tells us, *“If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”* Don't be afraid to approach Him as your

Father, He delights in giving good gifts to His children.

Prince of Peace

We all experience different seasons in life. Some are more challenging than others. Those times can sap our strength, energy, joy and peace. During those times, we need to experience God as our **Prince of Peace** in a deeper way. Psalm 29:11 says, *"The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace."* In fact, on the night of Jesus' birth the angels declared, *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth **peace, goodwill** toward men!"* God's will for us is peace and goodness. Do what it takes to cut out whatever keeps you from hearing that message and experiencing Jesus as the **Prince of Peace** in your life.

Maybe you need to cancel some Christmas activities this year so you can meet our Incarnate Savior in a new way. Or maybe He will speak loudest to you through the celebration and festivities and lights! It is okay to do Christmas differently to experience the fullness of God in your life. Do what it takes. You'll be glad you did!

Dr. Jodie Chiricosta is vice president of *Somebody Cares America/International*. She teaches and consults on a variety of Christian living and leadership topics and is a host of the *Charisma* podcast *Her God Story*.