

How to Let Your Christmas Joy Come Completely From Holy Spirit

It's that time again. What Andy Williams and other classic singers crooned to be "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year." Malls and stores are filled with holiday decorations, music, assorted Santas, endless sales people wooing you to buy their products and scrumptious smells of holiday food. But is it really the most wonderful time of the year?

I watched and listened as a guest on the Fox News channel said she hated the season, and especially the Christmas carols. You see, what brings joy to one is an irritant to another. She said it reminded her and others as well of what they don't have. Seeing the happy faces of family and friends getting together just emphasizes the loneliness many feel during the holiday season. Jewelry stores show people with that special someone giving and receiving the gift that lasts forever—diamonds. What if you are one who is away from loved ones and comes home after work to an empty apartment? It's lonely.

Everyone around you seems to be having a wonderful time, but you are left with the realization that you are missing out somehow. The sadness seems unbearable. We trained ourselves in this society to look for happiness in the wrong places. We look to what we have or receive and when that doesn't do it we look for that special someone to make us happy.

Joy is not found in the season, and fulfillment doesn't come because it's a certain time of year. People searching for it there end up being disappointed and disillusioned.

When I was a young child, I was taught, like many children, that Christmas Eve was special because Santa was coming and

would leave me my heart's desire. I remember looking out of my bedroom window to the sky to see if I could get a glimpse of Santa, his sleigh and reindeer. I was told I had to fall asleep so that he would come. I may not have been the most obedient child, but that night, I was extra good. Christmas morning came, and I bounded out of bed to see what Santa brought me. I loved Santa. I adored him. After all, he loved me whether I was bad or good, because he left me presents. The most important part of Christmas was Santa and the presents. That is still true for some people.

The worse part was the story of baby Jesus. Anything having to do with Jesus was dark green, grey and brown. Santa was red, white, glittery and joyous. Jesus was so sad. He was born in a smelly stable because there was no room at the inn. Then Herod ordered babies killed, and Mary and Joseph fled with Jesus to Egypt for protection. How could God let this happen? God knew everything but still let that happen. As a child, my adoration went to Santa, not God. I did not see or feel God's love, but I did feel Santa's.

So deep was my faith that when some classmates of a different faith said that there was no Santa, I fought them tooth and nail. I organized my fellow Santa believers, and war broke out in our second-grade classroom. Our teacher came to our defense and assured everyone that Santa was indeed real. Even at that young age, I fought for what I believed (a characteristic that remains with me at the ripe old age of 78).

When I met the Lord as my Lord and Savior and grew in intimacy with Him, I grieved over my childhood adoration. It was sincere, but it was misplaced. I struggled for years with whether anything I had been taught was really true. Is the Bible true? Is Jesus real? Does God really love us so much that He sent His Son to pay the price for our sin? I realize that not all children respond the way I did, but it made me extra cautious during the Christmas season when sharing holiday traditions with my children. I made sure we emphasized

God's gift to the world, and differentiated between fantasy fun and God's truth.

For many, it's been a rough year. They have lost jobs, homes and loved ones. After all, we live in turbulent times. We never know what will happen from one day to the next. But we can trust in these truths: God remains faithful, and His Word is true.

You'll not find joy in a season, in things, in people or in a person. That only comes in the Holy Spirit. He alone will bring total fulfillment, satisfaction and joy. Whether it's the holiday season, winter or tax season, God has provided us with one who will never leave us or forsake us and who will fulfill every desire of our heart. This Christmas, look up and thank God for His indescribable gift because you won't find joy in anything but Him.

Prayer Power for the Week of Dec. 17, 2018

This week as Christmas approaches, ask the Lord to order your steps so that you don't become overwhelmed by what needs to be done. Make sure you set your priorities to take time for Him first, then step by step, do what He requires each day. Continue to pray for revival, for directions in how to be a blessing to others during this time, and for our leaders. Remember our military, our allies and Israel. Read: Isaiah 7:14, 9:6; Galatians 4:4.