

## The Best & Worst Christmas Presence Ever

### **Back to the beginning and the basics:**

John 21, 1:1-14, Matthew 1:18-23, Genesis 1-2

The worst Christmas presents have no **VALUE** or **USE**.

The best Christmas presents have **VALUE** and **PURPOSE**.

The entire purpose of **CHRISTMAS** is that God  
can be **WITH US**.

It is *NOT*:

God is **FOR US**.

God will **LISTEN TO US**.

God will **BLESS US**.

It *IS* God WITH us in our \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Changing the false cliché:**

John 21, Galatians 2:20, Romans 5:8-11, 12:1-2, Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 2:20, Luke 24:13-35

Christianity is another dead **RELIGION** or a life-giving **RELATIONSHIP**.

This is why Jesus was all about us **REMAINING** with **HIM**.

A choice to **PRACTICE** His **PRESENCE** makes this either the **BEST** or **WORST GIFT** of all time.

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The worst Christmas presents have no \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

The best Christmas presents have \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

The entire purpose of \_\_\_\_\_ is that God  
can be \_\_\_\_\_.

It is *NOT*:

God is \_\_\_\_\_.

God will \_\_\_\_\_.

God will \_\_\_\_\_.

It *IS* God WITH us in our \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Changing the false cliché:**

John 21, Galatians 2:20, Romans 5:8-11, 12:1-2, Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 2:20, Luke 24:13-35

Christianity is another dead \_\_\_\_\_ or a life-giving \_\_\_\_\_.

This is why Jesus was all about us \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_.

A choice to \_\_\_\_\_ His \_\_\_\_\_ makes this either the \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_  
of all time.

## Food for Thought for the week of December 24, 2023

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As we celebrate the birth of Jesus this week, Matthew 1:23 tells us that Jesus was called Immanuel which means “God with us”. Today God remains with us through the Holy Spirit and one of the best ways for us to experience His presence in our lives is by spending time with Him in prayer.

As we read through the Bible, we find that King David was a man after God’s own heart in part because he sought the presence of the Lord through prayer. Psalm 34 is one of David’s prayers that can help guide us in seeking God’s presence in our lives. Read the psalm with this in mind before answering the questions below.

### **Psalm 34 New International Version (NIV)**

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| <i><sup>1</sup> I will extol the LORD at all times;<br/>his praise will always be on my lips.</i>            | <i><sup>12</sup> Whoever of you loves life<br/>and desires to see many good days,</i>                                  |
| <i><sup>2</sup> I will glory in the LORD;<br/>let the afflicted hear and rejoice.</i>                        | <i><sup>13</sup> keep your tongue from evil<br/>and your lips from telling lies.</i>                                   |
| <i><sup>3</sup> Glorify the LORD with me;<br/>let us exalt his name together.</i>                            | <i><sup>14</sup> Turn from evil and do good;<br/>seek peace and pursue it.</i>   |
| <i><sup>4</sup> I sought the LORD, and he answered me;<br/>he delivered me from all my fears.</i>            | <i><sup>15</sup> The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,<br/>and his ears are attentive to their cry;</i>           |
| <i><sup>5</sup> Those who look to him are radiant;<br/>their faces are never covered with shame.</i>         | <i><sup>16</sup> but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil,<br/>to blot out their name from the earth.</i> |
| <i><sup>6</sup> This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;<br/>he saved him out of all his troubles.</i>  | <i><sup>17</sup> The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;<br/>he delivers them from all their troubles.</i>     |
| <i><sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,<br/>and he delivers them.</i>       | <i><sup>18</sup> The LORD is close to the brokenhearted<br/>and saves those who are crushed in spirit.</i>             |
| <i><sup>8</sup> Taste and see that the LORD is good;<br/>blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.</i>     | <i><sup>19</sup> The righteous person may have many troubles,<br/>but the LORD delivers him from them all;</i>         |
| <i><sup>9</sup> Fear the LORD, you his holy people,<br/>for those who fear him lack nothing.</i>             | <i><sup>20</sup> he protects all his bones,<br/>not one of them will be broken.</i>                                    |
| <i><sup>10</sup> The lions may grow weak and hungry,<br/>but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.</i> | <i><sup>21</sup> Evil will slay the wicked;<br/>the foes of the righteous will be condemned.</i>                       |
| <i><sup>11</sup> Come, my children, listen to me;<br/>I will teach you the fear of the LORD.</i>             | <i><sup>22</sup> The LORD will rescue his servants;<br/>no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.</i>          |

Take a moment to reflect on 2023. Applying verses 1-6, write a prayer to God praising and thanking Him for what He did for you in 2023.

With verse 8 in mind, how does your life with Christ “taste” right now? Sweet? Sour? Spicy? Salty? Bitter? Bland? Why? Can you think of an area in your life where you want to “taste and see that the Lord is good” more than you have in the past?

This weekend, Chris stated that a choice to practice God’s presence makes this (Christmas) either the best or worst gift of all time. This psalm shows us what happens when we seek God’s presence. How true do verses 9-10 feel in your life right now?

Read verses 17-18 again. Like sharing a wish for your life with a friend, share with the Lord the ways you would like Him to be with you in 2024.