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"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker" (Psalm 95:6).

Home for Christmas

Lesson Subject: Christian families can make Christmas meaningful.

L55. Date: December 1987. **Text:** Luke 2:1-7; Hebrews 10:23-25; Colossians 3:23-24. **Topic:** Christmas; Family; Home.

The Christian observance of Christmas is uniquely centered in the home. It began with the birth of baby Jesus into the home of Joseph and Mary. Today the season is a wonderful opportunity for people to show their faith in Jesus through their homes. It is a time when people return home to be with the family.

Many Christians draw back from the observance of Christmas. They fear that the commercial emphasis of buying and giving gifts has taken the spiritual content out of the occasion. Without question, it has for many. Some people find Christmas a great time to get drunk, for instance. Others spend so much money during this season that they are in financial trouble for months afterwards. But a wrong observance by some is no reason to reject the season itself.

There is no other time of the year when the thoughts of the whole society are turned toward Jesus so much as at Christmas. It should be a time when Christians declare their faith in Christ and keep the spiritual meaning in the occasion. The central truth of this study is, "Christian families can make Christmas meaningful."

I. CHRISTMAS IN A JEWISH HOME

Jewish families do not celebrate Christmas with Christians today. They observe Hanukkah (a celebration of the rededication of the temple by Judas

Maccabaeus in 165 B.C.) at the same season of the year. And yet, the first Christmas came in a Jewish home!

A. Christmas came in a chosen home. Mary, a Jewish girl in Nazareth, was engaged to marry a local carpenter named Joseph. But before the marriage was consummated, an angel came to tell her she would conceive miraculously (without a man) and bear the Christ child (Luke 1:26-38). God himself selected the mother and the home into which His Son would be born. Neither Joseph nor Mary expected her to be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. *"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). But God chose it to be so.

B. Christmas came in a humble home. Joseph was not a man of political power or material wealth. He could afford no better than a stable to spend the night at the time Jesus was born. He and Mary took a pair of doves or pigeons to present for Mary's purification sacrifice to God because they could not afford to buy a ram (Leviticus 12:8). The gifts of the wise men provided money for their journey into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod (Matthew 2:1-23). Even in adulthood Jesus said, *"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"* (Luke 9:58).

C. Christmas came in a protected home. The wise men came to provide money for the holy family. The angels came to warn them to flee from danger, then again to tell them that the danger was passed. One is reminded of the promise of Psalm 91:11, *"He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."* So God protected and provided for the family into which His Son was born that first Christmas.

II. CHRISTMAS IN YOUR PERSONAL OBSERVANCE

A. You can observe Christmas because of your faith in Jesus. Only a believer can observe Christmas aright. While many have turned a holy day into a holiday, *"Let us holdfast the profession of our faith without wavering"* (Hebrews 10:23). An abuse of Christmas by some can no more invalidate the observance for you than the abuse of Sunday can make it cease to be a day of worship for you. Keep Christmas truly Christian in your personal observance because He is real to you.

B. You can observe Christmas as a witness to others. Be the "pattern" by which others may be pointed to Christ and the true meaning of Christmas (Titus 2:7). Make home decorations that carry a religious theme. Send cards which reflect the true meaning of the season. Give gifts which

remind people of the gift of God to us in the person of Jesus. Christmas can be your greatest opportunity to witness all year.

C. You can observe Christmas by faithful attendance at worship.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" is a good exhortation for Christmas time (Hebrews 10:25). Often the lowest attendance in church all year occurs at that season. Jesus practiced regular attendance in public worship (Luke 4:16). The first disciples *"were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God"* (Luke 24:53). Your faithful attendance and participation in the worship meetings of your church can be a good testimony of your faith in Christ.

Here is the key to the observance of Christmas: Do not observe a season, but remember a person. Keep Christ in Christmas and you will keep your Christmas a Christian observance.

III. CHRISTMAS IN YOUR FAMILY HOME (Colossians 3:23, 24)

"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23).

A. Make a gift list. Yes, it is permissible to give gifts to those we love on special religious occasions (Esther 9:22; Nehemiah 8:8-12). The important issue is to keep God at the center of your giving. So put Jesus' name at the top of your Christmas list and give Him the largest gift of all.

B. Plan family worship. Sing songs about Jesus. Read the Bible account of His birth. Pray in the name of Jesus. Testify to the blessings you have through Jesus. Worship Him and rejoice in Him at home and in church.

Attend the special services of your church. Plan family worship at home, particularly before opening your gifts. Be sure that every family member understands God's great gift in Jesus.

IV. CHRISTMAS ALL YEAR LONG (Philippians 2:5-11)

The account of the incarnation of our Lord God teaches us to live in that same spirit all year long, not just in December. Here are four principles to live by.

A. Do not be ambitious for personal advantage. Jesus was *"in the form of God,"* but He gave it up to come to us (verse 6).

B. Be willing to be nothing if God wills it. Jesus *"made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the*

likeness of men" (verse 7). Make any sacrifice necessary in order to serve Him.

C. Give yourself away for the sake of others. Jesus, *"being found in fashion as a man, . . . humbled himself, and became obedient unto death"* (verse 8). That is the way to serve God.

D. Find your highest delight in glorifying God (verses 9-11). That is the reason for our existence. There can be no Christmas without Christ.

There can be no Christian Christmas without worship and commitment. Keep Christ in Christmas and Christmas in your heart and home all year long.

QUESTIONS

1. In what way is Christmas a home observance?
2. Why do some Christians refuse to observe Christmas?
3. What are our witnessing possibilities at Christmas time?
4. Why was the first Christmas in a Jewish home?
5. Why do you think God chose that particular home?
6. How does faith give true meaning to Christmas?
7. How can you witness to your faith in Jesus at Christmas?
8. What should guide our giving at Christmas?
9. How can one have the Christmas spirit all year long?
10. What will you do this year to make yours a truly Christian Christmas?