



COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

by Vincent M. Newfield

Remember when you were little and it was Christmas? The excitement and anticipation of Christmas morning . . . the savory smells of fabulous food that filled the air . . . the golden glow of a roaring fire on a cold winter night . . . the sensational sounds of songs of the season . . . Ahh, the memories . . .

Without a doubt, my memories of Christmas are some of the sweetest I have. I so enjoyed “decking the halls,” trimming the tree and shopping for family and friends. There are so many things I treasure about celebrating Christ’s birth while growing up. But out of all the things I did, the one thing I treasure the most was being with family and friends.

Life is about relationships. You and I were born as the result of a loving *relationship* between our father and mother (with a few exceptions). Similarly, throughout our lives we learn and grow through the relationships we have with our parents, friends and teachers. Every fact and figure, every truth and tradition we know and live by was taught to us by someone we were in relationship with. Without these crucial connections, life would be lifeless.

Think about it. What good is it to feast on delicious dinners and desserts or watch a wonderful holiday classic on TV if we’re alone? It’s being with the ones we love and making memories together that really counts. There’s just nothing quite like sitting around the Christmas tree together with a cup of hot chocolate, singing carols and exchanging gifts. As Michael Shepard alluded to in his article, the fellowship we have with family and friends is the glue that holds us together. The greater the fellowship, the stronger the bond between us.

There is great joy in giving. I can still remember the first time I went to Woolworth’s department store and bought gifts for my family with my own money. I was about eleven years old, and I was so excited to buy socks for my dad, slippers for my mom, and a flannel shirt for my uncle. With great love and care, I joyfully wrapped each gift and placed them near a small Christmas tree in my room. I couldn’t wait till Christmas Day . . . the day I would be able to express my love for my family by giving them the gifts I had purchased.

The amazing thing is, the same kind of excitement and desire to give, which I’ve experienced so many times, is the same excitement and desire God the Father wants to share with you and me. He was so excited about giving us His gift that first Christmas morning. With great love and care, He joyfully wrapped His Son, Jesus, and placed Him near the tree. He couldn’t wait until Christmas Day . . . the day He would be able to express His great love for us by giving us His gift—the gift of eternal life and a permanent place in His family.

Experience that great family feeling! When I look back upon the Christmases that have passed, I don’t remember most of the gifts I got. Oh, there are a few specific ones that pop into my head, like the Fisher Price circus train, the G.I. Joe with the Kung Fu grip, and a Teddy bear I named Claude. But what I remember most of all is that great family feeling. Even when my behavior wasn’t very good, my family still wanted me around—they wanted to share their hearts with me, and they wanted me to share my heart with them.

In the same way, your heavenly Father wants you around. Regardless of your age, skin color, education level or past mistakes, He wants to spend this Christmas and *every day of your life* hearing you share your heart and sharing His heart with you. Even if your earthly parents have rejected you, your Father hasn’t. He is standing with His arms wide open to greet you. The fire of His love for you is warm and burning bright, and He longs to fellowship with you in a way like you’ve never experienced before. Can you hear His voice? He is saying, “Please, come home for Christmas.”

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