



*It's more than **GENEROSITY** and **CANDY CANES***

WHAT IS “Christmas Spirit” ALL ABOUT?



BY ABBY TRIVETT

Christmas. It's the time of year when people suddenly become generous and considerate toward those to whom they have not spoken nor thought about all year, and many push aside the stresses of daily life for a sudden jolly attitude. But where does this come from? Does chaotic holiday shopping, massive amounts of cooking and buying gifts for relatives you haven't talked to suddenly, almost out of nowhere, actually give you a boost to do things differently from the other 11 months of the year?

While the festivities surrounding us can be exciting at Christmas and the lights glamorous, the Christmas spirit is

about far more than just seeing and doing things that are out of the ordinary. Unfortunately, we live in a highly materialistic society that believes gift wrap is more important than it actually is for our well-being. But what if there really is a spiritual component to Christmas? What if there really is something behind an increase in joy and our decisions to help out those in need?

Perhaps, it's the same joy that was first felt by John the Baptist while he was still in his mother's womb at the news of Jesus' coming that we are experiencing.

Right after the angel Gabriel delivered the good news to Mary that she had favor with the Lord and would be the

mother of the Son of God, she saw her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth herself was

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experiencing a miraculous pregnancy in her old age with John the Baptist. As the two women got together, Scripture says that John the Baptist leaped in Elizabeth’s womb.

“When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,” (Luke 1:41-42).

Jesus’ existence here on earth brought the very joy of the person of the Holy Spirit. Christmas is about more than just our materialistic gifts. It’s about the very promises of God being fulfilled to His people. He promised a Savior, and the Savior had come. And with the coming of the Savior meant that His Spirit was on the way who would empower us to personally know Him and dwell with Him. God fulfilling His promises to mankind is all the reason in the world to have joy. The Comforter, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Lords had kept His promise to redeem humanity.

Elizabeth knew that the miracle child inside of her wasn’t just moving around without reason. She knew it was because Mary carried the very God of all creation inside of her. She told Mary, “Indeed, as soon as the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy,” (v. 44). The joy that only comes through the person of Christ finally arrived.

The Real Spirit Behind Christmas Is the Holy Spirit

There’s only one spirit capable of miraculous conception and true overwhelming joy, and that’s the Holy Spirit. He’s the one who made Christmas possible, and without Him, there would be no such thing as Christmas.

I can admit that I adore Christmas. I’m one of those people who, love it or hate it, have Christ-centered Christmas music playing well before Thanksgiving, and I have loved the season my entire life. If you ask any of my former college roommates, they can attest to the fact that I would frequently wake up to Christmas alarms because it’s much more cheerful than your standard “beep!” Perhaps the nostalgia of some of the real-life white Christmases that I had as a child or the annual family traditions that were hallmarks of my youth contribute to my love of the season. However, what I love most about it as an adult is seeing barriers erode for sharing the gospel to those who do not believe.

I believe the command of the angels to Mary, Joseph and the shepherds to “not be afraid” resonates with more people at this time of the year because most can agree that Jesus is at a very basic level related to Christmas, even if they have not yet heard about who He truly is. This opens the door for us to speak and move with the Holy Spirit to share the full gospel message. After all, it was through the birth of Christ that the good news of the gospel was spread to the shepherds.

“But the angel said to them, ‘Listen! Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord,’” (Luke 2:10-11).

There’s only one true spirit behind Christmas, and that’s the Holy Spirit. It’s the Holy Spirit who emboldens us to share this message and embrace what the heart of Christmas is truly all about.

Christmas Purpose & Meaning

When we turn our focus away from the real purpose of Christmas, we miss out on the fullness of what the Holy Spirit has for us to gain in this season.

I don’t mean that there isn’t room for Christmas cookies and hot chocolate by the fireplace. I love those two things as much as anyone else does during this season. The problem is when we only focus on the external things around us instead of the One who has imparted the joy we can have in those things. That’s where the risk lies.

The Holy Spirit is with us all the time, yet we so frequently miss the fact that He is in the details of our lives. When we get the opportunity to enjoy these small moments, we need to attribute it to the right person. It’s the Holy Spirit who brought about the season when Mary first conceived Jesus, and it is through Him that the joy for all mankind has now come.

First Chronicles 16:23 tells us to: “Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from

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day to day.” We are to proclaim the joy that comes from the Lord’s salvation each and every day. It is the salvation of the Lord that came through Christ that is worth rejoicing in. The Holy Spirit is the One who highlights the promise fulfilled and the exceedingly and abundantly far more than we ever could have hoped for or imagined life. Isn’t it amazing that we get the pleasure of enjoying the festivities surrounding Christmas because God not only self-sacrificially gave us His Son to cover the cost, but because the payment was more than enough to provide us with overflow? God is such a good God that He not only gave us His Son, but He gave us His Spirit so we could personally know Him.

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Holy Spirit Highlights Goodness of God’s Gifts

Something that has become one of my favorite things to do at Christmas time is to participate in my church’s toy collection. There’s something special about walking in to the store with the mindset that what I purchase could impact a child’s life for the better.

When I pray about my shopping day, I ask the Lord to highlight the items that I should buy. I have no idea who I am buying for, but I know that even His smallest children have great desires inside of their hearts. As I walk down the aisles, I continue to pray, and something about this entire experience connects me even closer to the heart of the Father. Knowing that I am seeking a good and abundant gift for one of His children is a reminder that He has also given me an abundant gift in Christ. As I am excited to provide a toy for a child I’ve never met, how much more is God’s excitement to give good gifts to His children that He knows and loves intimately?

Picking up toy after toy that stands out to me until I feel that my job is done is a small but satisfying kind of adventure. Knowing that I picked out these items by the leading of the Holy Spirit provides a different type of exhilaration because I know that

there is a child out there who will be blessed by this unexpected prize. This somehow brings about a deeper level of

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humility and joy.

When we give according to the Holy Spirit’s guidance, we see another facet of the depth of God’s love for us.

The presents should never be about us; giving is not supposed to be a spectacle about who we are or what we are able to do. Instead, it’s about how God wants to bless His children by using us as His vessels. Luke 11:13 provides the perfect insight into how God sees us and desires to bless us: “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

The gifts that we give pale in comparison to the gifts that God provides His children with. He provides gifts that only a holy God could give. If we in our sinful nature can give gifts that will bring joy to someone else, how much greater of a gift can a holy God give to His children?

As the holiday season rolls around, this is the time to remember that the true spirit of Christmas isn’t just to be found in twinkling lights or in the sprawling festivities happening all throughout the month of December. While we can appreciate these events as a gift of overflow, there is no greater gift than seeing the Holy Spirit fulfill God’s promise to His people by presenting us with the sacrificial gift of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. ♦

ABBY TRIVETT is a marketing copywriter and coordinator at Charisma Media.