

## Relationships Matter More...

(...than all of the other stuff we do at Christmas to celebrate the holiday).

Message 01 of the series "Simple Christmas"

### A. Christmas is about God giving peace and goodwill to us through Jesus so we can have a right relationship with Him.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" Luke 2:8-14 (NKJV)

"For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6 (NLT)

### B. Seven things we can do this Christmas to give peace and goodwill to others so we can have right relationships with them.

1. We can be responsible for our attitudes, NOT the attitudes of others.

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Romans 12:18 (NIV)

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Proverbs 15:1 (NIV)

"Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many."

Hebrews 12:15 (NLT)

2. We can apologize and admit our part of problems.

"And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye." Matthew 7:3-5 (NLT)

3. We can choose to forgive and move on.

"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!" Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT)

4. We can choose to love others even if we don't agree with them.

"A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."' So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.' "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began. Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, and he asked one of the servants what was going on. 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.' "The older brother was angry and

wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!' "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'" Luke 15:11-32 (NLT)

5. We can be respectful and gracious in our conversations.

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:6 (NIV)

"Never speak harshly to an older man, but appeal to him respectfully as you would to your own father. Talk to younger men as you would to your own brothers." 1 Timothy 5:1 (NLT)

6. We can pray together.

"When our time was up, they escorted us out of the city to the docks. Everyone came along—men, women, children. They made a farewell party of the occasion! We all kneeled together on the beach and prayed." Acts 21:5 (MSG)

7. We can open our Christmas celebrations to the needy, the lonely and the less fortunate.

"The next time you put on a dinner, don't just invite your friends and family and rich neighbors, the kind of people who will return the favor. Invite some people who never get invited out, the misfits from the wrong side of the tracks. You'll be—and experience—a blessing. They won't be able to return the favor, but the favor will be returned—oh, how it will be returned!—at the resurrection of God's people."

Luke 14:12-14 (MSG)

*Life Application:* We can do all of these things through the power of the Holy Spirit.

"So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do." 2 Thessalonians 1:11 (NLT)

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### **Connect Group Questions:**

1. What is your favorite family Christmas tradition?
2. Who are you looking forward to seeing the most this Christmas?
3. Who can you show kindness to this Christmas that is lonely, hurting or less fortunate?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. How can you show love to those you don't agree with this Christmas?
5. Why are family gatherings often difficult at Christmas?
6. Reconciliation means to restore a relationship or friendship. Read Romans 5:12-19. Why did our relationship with God need restoring?
7. Is there anyone you need to reconcile with before this Christmas? Which of the statements below resonates the most with you? How can you begin restoring a strained relationship?
  - We can be responsible for our attitudes, NOT the attitudes of others.
  - We can admit our part of problems.
  - We can choose to forgive and move on.
  - We can choose to love and pray for others even if we don't agree with them.
  - We can be respectful and gracious in our conversations.
8. How would your family respond if you asked them to pray together this Christmas?