

What Christmas means to me



Unwrapping God's steadfast care.

By Beverly Goldsmith

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Over the course of my life, Christmas seems to have undergone many changes. When I was a child, it used to be about waking up to gifts mysteriously left at the end of my bed. We gathered around the table to eat a full English roast dinner accompanied by steaming hot plum pudding. Then there were songs about snow, warm glowing fires, and sleigh rides. Often all of this took place on a scorching

Australian summer's day as we wiped away the perspiration from our faces. Years later, the lovingly-wrapped presents and the delicious food took a back seat as the ever-growing extended family sought to maintain contact and spend time with each other.

Fast forward to today. Cultural differences have altered the landscape of Christmas in this country. The sunshine and relaxed life-style have led to barbecues and family celebrations at the beach. Commercialism has swept-in with stores commencing selling for the season earlier each year, and people over-spending on their credit cards. On the home front, family members have passed on, others have moved to places far away. For many people it's a lonely period – even friends can be hard to find.

With all the changes that can take place with ourselves, those we know, and the community at large, it's tempting not to dread the festive season or want to shun it entirely. I know, because this is how I once felt. The family scene had dramatically altered. My husband and I found ourselves on our own for the first time in our lives. When it happened the next year and the next, it was hard to take. We tried inviting friends, acquaintances, and neighbors but everyone had their own plans. No one it seemed needed our company.

When another empty season-of-cheer loomed, I decided to take stock of what I was thinking. Did changes to people and circumstances affect the real meaning of Christmas? Did I have to receive gifts or share a special meal with family and friends to celebrate this special time? In thinking it over, I realized that material accouterments, food and companionship are outward symbols of celebration - like sending greeting cards and singing carols. It also dawned on me that I had inadvertently substituted these symbols for the real reason I commemorate Christmas.



The birth of Christ Jesus was not the arrival of just another child into the world. His advent heralded unprecedented change for humankind. For me, his coming overturned the belief that man was forever doomed to be nothing more than a miserable sinner. Jesus' rousing command, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" was, and still is, a radical, life-changing message. It affirms that we are the perfect creation of our perfect Father. [Matthew 5:48] Our birthright as His sons and daughters is wellness and peace of mind.

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Because of Jesus' shining example of living, I've learned of the enduring love of God. As God's offspring our lives are constantly nurtured and sustained. We are forever companioned by divine Love. As a result of Jesus' teachings, countless individuals, myself included, have found comfort as well as health and healing. We've received the everlasting gift of harmony - the kingdom of heaven, that Jesus said we would find already within us.

Thinking about Jesus and what his life means to me in these turbulent times, inspires me to remember that I am today a grateful beneficiary of his teachings and work. Jesus gave the lasting gift of hope, health and harmony to anyone wanting to receive it. That's something worth remembering year-in and year-out.



The spiritual understanding of God's steadfast care is a blessing that can be unwrapped every day. While the fluctuations of human living may bring change into our experience, and try to cast a shadow over what should be a joyous time of year, they can't ever alter the real reason we commemorate Christmas. God's love is constant, abundant. Accepting that His love for us truly does meet every need, and living this truth moment-by-moment in all situations, is reason to be glad. To me, it's cause for celebration now and all year round.

Beverly Goldsmith is a practitioner and teacher of Christian Science spiritual healing in Brisbane, Australia. <http://www.beverlyg.com>