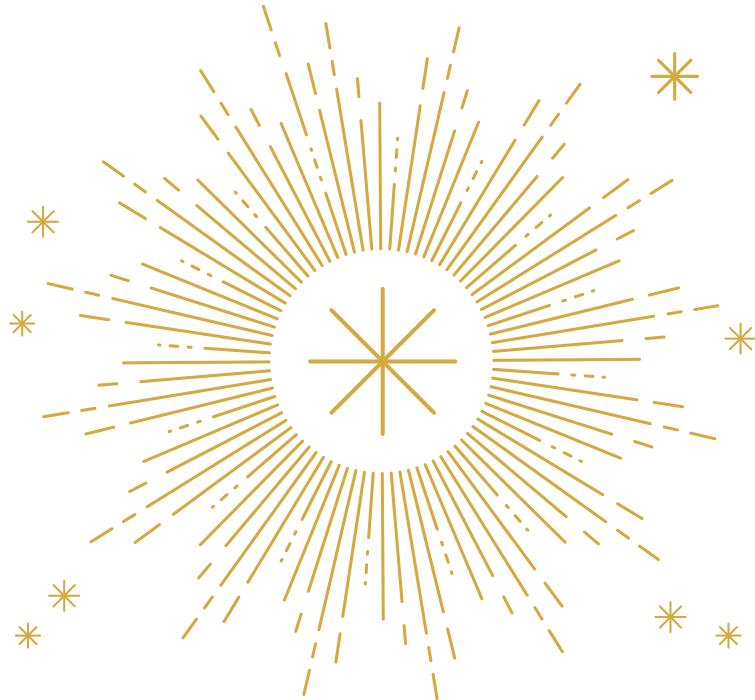


*
* ALL YOU *
*
WANT FOR
CHRISTMAS



DAVID PLATT

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83728-069-8

Designed by Jude May

Cover image © dar woto | iStock

Printed in India

10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com

6b Upper Water Street, Newry, Co Down, Northern Ireland, BT34 1DJ

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1 3 5 7 10 8 6 4 2

For family members, friends, and others
who don't yet know the Servant of our souls



Contents

Introduction: Why did Jesus come?	11
Reason 1: To be with you	21
Reason 2: To die instead of you	37
Reason 3: To show you how to live	53
Reason 4: To be your servant	67
Conclusion: What do you want for Christmas?	83

Introduction



Why did
Jesus come?





Introduction

Why did Jesus come?

What do you want for Christmas?

As a dad of six kids ranging in age from eighteen down to two, this question evokes a variety of responses in my home. And a variety of price tags, as well. My two-year-old's request for a car is a lot easier to fulfill than my eighteen-year-old's request for the same!

I wonder how *you* might respond to this question. In fact, I want to ask you to pause for a moment and actually answer it. If you could

receive anything for Christmas, what would it be?

Your first thought may be a particular possession, but I'd encourage you to go a bit deeper than that. For example, in recent years, there have been challenges in my life, my family, and my work, and I've found myself just wanting rest. Or peace. Or strength. Or healing for people I love who are hurting. I've wanted hope that there's some light at the end of the tunnel.

I'm guessing I'm not alone. At the deepest level, we all want our needs met and our desires fulfilled. And I think if we're honest, we would love the idea of someone coming to

us, asking us what we want for Christmas, and then providing that very thing.

Now what if I told you that the heart of Christmas is actually about receiving what you most want and need?

The heart of
Christmas is
actually about
receiving what
you most want

I'm guessing you may be skeptical. After all, the events of the first Christmas—Jesus' birth in Bethlehem surrounded by angels and shepherds—seem far removed from the desires or needs you and I may have in the twenty-first century. And we're quite used to advertisements over-promising and under-delivering, especially at this time of year.

But what if this is really true? Despite the understandable doubts you may have about the Christmas story or its relevance for your life, I'd like to ask you to read the pages ahead with an open mind and heart. In this short book, I want to share with you four reasons why Jesus came. As I do, I invite you to at least imagine what it would be like if there was one true God who loves you so much that he wants to *give to* you, rather than *take from* you.

God loves
you so much
that he wants
to *give to* you,
rather than
take from you

What if the Christmas story is actually about how the God who made you wants to fulfill your deepest longings and meet your deepest needs?

Imagine what that gift would mean for you not just this Christmas or this coming year, but forever.

Reason 1



To be
with you





Reason 1

To be with you

... the Son of Man came ...

Journey with me to a temple in Southeast Asia. I remember sitting at a table on the green grass of the temple grounds, looking up at the multi-tiered brown pagoda beside. Two religious leaders sat with me, one of them Buddhist and the other Hindu.

For a while, our conversation revolved around simply getting to know one another, learning about each other's lives and families. Eventually,

our conversation shifted to faith. We talked about beliefs we shared with one another, including the need to love and respect other people and work for the good of all. Then one of them made the following statement.

“We may have different views about small issues, but when it comes down to the most important issues, our religions are the same.”

The other leader nodded with a smile, then asked me what I thought.

I paused for a moment, then I said, “It sounds as though you both picture God (or whatever you may call ‘god’) at the top of a mountain while we’re all standing at the bottom. I may take one path up the mountain while you may take another, but in the end we will all be in the same place.”

At this point, they were both smiling and nodding. One of the men replied happily, “Exactly, you understand!”

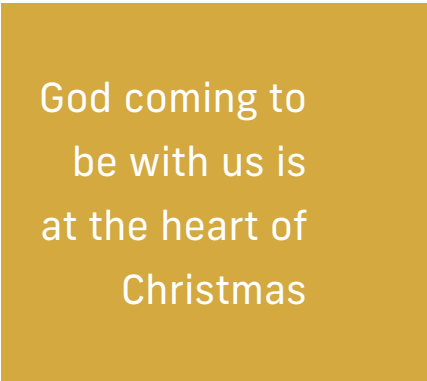
Then I paused for another moment, leaned in, and said, “I have a question: What would you

think if I told you that the God at the top of the mountain actually came down to where we are? What if God doesn't wait for us to find our way to him, but instead comes to us?"

They thought for a moment and then both responded. "That would be great."

I replied, "Let me introduce you to the fundamental difference between our beliefs: Jesus."

This picture—of God coming to be with us—is at the heart of Christmas. Over and above all the wonderful traditions you or I may be accustomed to at Christmastime, from singing carols to swapping gifts to sharing meals with family and friends, Christmas is a revolutionary, radical, mind-blowing, earth-shaking claim that God himself has come to be with us. When an angel told Joseph about Jesus' birth, that's exactly what



God coming to
be with us is
at the heart of
Christmas

he declared: Jesus would be called “Immanuel,” which means “God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

So why did God come to be with us in Jesus? Well, the Bible lists a multitude of reasons why he entered our world. Here is a quick sampling:

*Jesus came to make a way for us to have
abundant, eternal life.
(John 3:16; 10:10)*

*Jesus came to seek those who've lost their
way and help those who don't have it all
figured out.
(Luke 19:10; Mark 2:17)*

*Jesus came to bring light in a dark world
and redeem what is broken.
(John 12:46; Galatians 4:4–5)*

*Jesus came to take away sins and free
people from the fear of death.
(1 John 3:5; Hebrews 2:14–15)*

Yet out of all the verses in the Bible that talk about why Jesus came, one in particular has always stood out to me. In a sense, this specific verse summarizes all the others, but it also takes things to another level—a level that is, frankly, shocking. It almost feels inappropriate to say, and I wouldn't believe it if it didn't come straight from the mouth of Jesus himself:

*"For even the Son of Man came not
to be served but to serve, and to
give his life as a ransom for many."
(Mark 10:45)*

This one verse depicts all four of the reasons I want to show you about why Jesus was born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, and it highlights this first reason—that Jesus came to be with you and me—in a brilliant way.

Think about Jesus' words in this statement. We can almost miss their significance if we're not careful, but did you notice that Jesus is the only person ever born who can say that he decided to be born? "The Son of Man *came* ..."

No one else in all of history has made that decision. None of us concluded one day, "I think it's about time *to come* to the world." That's because, of course, none of us existed before we were conceived.

But Jesus did.

This is part of the mystery of Christmas. The Bible refers to Jesus as the Son of God. This description of Jesus is often misunderstood (and sometimes intentionally misrepresented) because Jesus is not God's Son in the same way I am my father's son. God didn't have a relationship with Mary that produced Jesus like my parents had a relationship with one another that produced me.

The Bible uses the word "son" in many ways beyond merely describing a male born to

parents. For example, at times “son” can simply refer to someone’s nature or identity, and that’s how “son” is used to refer to Jesus. These two titles for Jesus—*Son of Man* and *Son of God*—specifically point us to Jesus’ human nature and divine nature. The title Son of Man highlights how Jesus is fully human (like us). The other title, Son of God, emphasizes how Jesus is fully divine (unlike us). And when you put these two titles together, you realize what makes Jesus different from every other person in the history of the world: he is God in the flesh.

That’s how Jesus could decide to come into the world, and it makes the story of Christmas the most amazing news in the world. For Christmas is an extraordinary declaration that God is not a distant deity separated from us and all the hurts and heartaches, challenges and struggles we experience in this world of evil and suffering. Instead, God has come to be with us, to meet us where we are, and to make a way for us to have life with him.

This is so important to understand in a world where many people think that all religions are fundamentally the same, and that any differences between beliefs are merely superficial. Often people say, in a similar way to the sentiments expressed by my friends outside that Southeast Asian temple, “Just choose whichever religion

The utterly unique message of Christmas is that God has come to be with us—no other religion makes that claim

works best for you—or no religion at all—because all of our paths are essentially alike.”

But Christmas tells us that’s not true. The utterly unique message of Christmas is that God has come to be with us! No other religion makes that claim.

And think about *why* God came to be with us.

It feels almost too obvious to write, but I want to make sure you don’t miss it: God *came* to be

with us because apparently, God *wants* to be with us.

A friend of mine was telling me about a conversation he'd had with a man who was extremely wealthy, attractive, successful, and overly confident in himself. My friend asked him, "Do you think you will go to heaven when you die?"

The man pondered for a moment, then said, "Yes, I believe I will go to heaven."

"Why do you think that?" my friend asked.

"Because I believe God wants me there."

When I heard this story, I immediately thought, "What an arrogant man!" But then, after further reflection, I realized he's right. God does want him there. And he wants me there, too. And you, as well! Not because you're rich, attractive, successful, or anything else in this

world. Actually, not because of anything *in* you at all. He wants you there because of his great love for you. And because of his love, he wants your company forever.

I encourage you to let this soak in before moving on. God himself—the God who spoke and all creation came into being, the God who causes the sun to rise and calls the stars by name, the God before whom mountains quake and seas roar, the God who rules and reigns over all things in all the universe—came to earth as a baby because he wants to be with *you*. The God who made you and knows what is best for you loves you personally and wants you to experience abundant, eternal life with him. But there's a barrier to you and me experiencing life in relationship with God, which leads us to the second reason Jesus came.



