

Reflections from “Christmas is NOT YOUR Birthday”

By Mike Slaughter

1. How do you picture God? Does this image have more in common with Santa Claus or with Jesus?
2. Think about your family’s Christmas traditions. How many of them focus on your own comfort and pleasure? What new traditions can you plan that focus more on presence than presents?
3. What ideas do you have that could be seeds for a mission miracle? What group are you connected to or who are some people that could help make it happen?
4. What is your vision of a perfect Christmas?
5. How do you think Mary felt in the months and days leading up to Jesus’ birth? How does her experience of the first Christmas influence the way you approach the holiday season?
6. How can you celebrate Jesus in the midst of your struggles? How can God use your struggles to help others this Christmas?
7. Do you really believe that God loves you madly, passionately, unconditionally? Think about the deepest, most enduring relationships you’ve experienced – with a parent, spouse, friend, or a child. If these are but a glimpse of the relationship God wants with you, what must that mean about God’s love?
8. God promises to bring good out of bad, to raise up the lowly, and to comfort the afflicted. How would you view your life if you trusted completely in those promises?
9. What would it mean for us to love others with that same love God loves us? How would that be different from the safe, cautious ways we often show Christ’s love in the world?
10. Are there people on your list who are hard to shop for? What would happen if you put time and energy into Jesus’ WISH LIST each Christmas? We serve God when we serve others. We give to Jesus when we sacrifice our time, talents and resources to meet others’ needs. The church is the body of Christ. We are the only hands, feet and wallets that God has!

11. Get creative! What new traditions and family practices could you start this year to make every Christmas a more authentic celebration of Jesus?
12. How can you simplify your home to create more room for peace and togetherness, rather than for more stuff? What excess can you get rid of in your home or schedule to more accurately reflect where your priorities lie?
13. What would it mean for you to “seek God’s kingdom first”? what changes would that shift necessitate in your life?
14. Take a moment now to think of ways you can make first things first in the new year, by finishing the following sentences:
 - a. I will spend more time with the people I love by _____
 - b. I will demonstrate my faith in practical service by _____
 - c. I will cultivate my relationship with God by _____