

As I was driving down my street toward home the other day, my children were counting the houses that had Christmas lights.

With two weeks to go, we are in the midst of a scramble to maximize the splendor of the season. The day after Thanksgiving is known as Black Friday and some sales events started as early as 4 a.m. Many of us were horrified to learn of the casualty of greed that occurred; a Walmart employee was killed by stampeding mobs of shoppers trying to be the first at a limited-supply bargain item. In the midst of the bloody noses and expletives that were shared in consumer frenzies throughout the country, one must search hard to find what is "holy" in the "holiday."

While everyone has been talking about "change" for quite some time now, we have already seen that some things remain the same. Selfishness still motivates bad behavior and some people will suffer loss while others gain. Big-ticket gift items will continue to fly off the shelves and mobile devices with touch screens will be stuffed into many stockings. Football and movies will be viewed on screens that are ever bigger and flatter, and there will be others who can barely squeak through it all. Some will have a lot and others will not. What else, during this season, will not be improved? Will this December show a spike in depression and suicides as in previous years? Will people still try to drown their emotions in alcohol instead of drinking deeply from "the spring of life"? There is a lot of money being poured into television advertising relying on your inability to be whole without buying what they are selling. And with all of the craziness that has captivated Christmas, some will find what is important and they will make it a centerpiece in their home.

My wife and I were talking about love this morning; the kind that keeps marriages tightly knit and families together. We discussed our relationship and the advice that comes from Scripture. God holds the answers, but few are asking the questions. I find it fascinating that much of what is done during this time of year is motivated by a desire to communicate care. Whether baking cookies, gift giving, or throwing parties, we desire to create intimacy in relationships. However, statistics reveal that our society understands very little about how to do this well. Instead of letting God direct how we live our lives, we look to every other source

except the one that could truly help.

We will all see nativity scenes, lit-up crosses, and messages that remind us of the meaning of our celebrations. "Jesus Is the Reason for the Season" will be expounded from lawn displays in various parts of our community. But the temptation at every turn will be to remove "Christ" from Christmas. "Merry Xmas" is so much easier some believe; no sin, no guilt, no obligation. But this also means no truth, no forgiveness, no restoration, no wholeness, and no hope. Once again, this season will represent competing values and ideals. While the world may not change this year as much as we might wish, what happens in our hearts and homes is completely within our choices. What will you choose this year?

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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:30am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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