Can you believe that it’s December 23. There is no other holiday in our culture that spends an entire month preparing for a single day – and stores are trying to encourage us to start 2 months ahead! There’s no other holiday in our culture which has such a large set of its own special music. In fact, most styles of music develop some songs for this holiday. The combined variety of unique holiday decorations, food, greeting cards, traditions, concerts, plays and activities dwarf any other American holiday. Our cultural celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ is beyond any other celebration we do as a culture.

Christmas is the recognition of the birth of Jesus – a person whose significance turned out to be so great that the world ended up literally measuring history by it. When we talk about history, the years are either BC (before the birth of Christ) or A.D. (after the birth of Christ). Even modern attempts to scrub “Christ” out of education, still point to Jesus. Some now refer to time as B.C.E. (before the common era) and C.E. (common era). That still begs the question, why break history at that point? That is the recognition of Jesus’ birth! But we celebrate Christmas for something more significant than the birth of an influential person over 2,000 years ago.

Christmas is a celebration of the incarnation. The incarnation is the fancy word used to describe God leaving the glories of heaven and coming down to become the man Jesus Christ. As we read earlier the Word was God (v 1), nothing was created without him (v 3) and that Word, who is God, became flesh and lived here on earth (v 14) – READ v 14a. Jesus is God come down in human form and He literally “pitched His tent among us!” It is almost as if John had said, “I want you to consider Jesus in His teaching and deeds. But you will not understand the good news of Jesus in its fullest sense unless you view Him from this point of view. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, and His words and deeds are those of the God-Man.”

We say phrases like “Jesus is the reason for the season” and “keep Christ in Christmas” to remind us that the core reason for this holiday season has to do with Jesus Christ. So let’s take the rest of our time to ask the question, What is so special about the incarnation – God becoming a person? What are we actually celebrating this season as bible-believing Christians? There are at least 7 incredible truths that we celebrate each Christmas here in John 1. Every year we can understand one or more of these more deeply than the year before!

PROPOSITION: We celebrate many powerful, eternal, and transforming truths when we celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas time!

I. We celebrate the unique nature of God – Trinity

The first thing that we celebrate every Christmas is the unique nature of God! READ v 1-2. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. How can you be with someone and still be that someone? This is referring to God’s unique nature as Trinity - there is only one true God but that true God exists in 3 persons.
The **Word** here, which exists from the very beginning is BOTH eternally God and eternally in relationship with God. Think about that a long time and you will really get your head spinning. Any time I have taught this truth of God's nature as Trinity, some will inevitably say, **"This is very hard to understand."** I used to try to intellectually explain it more, but now simply say, **"God is uniquely God, why do we think we can totally understand him."** How can the One who has created everything, is above time, and if God had a body, the Universe would just be His hand-breath as Isaiah proclaims – Why do we think that One should be simple to us? Every illustration will will ever give to describe God's nature as Trinity will always fall short. Why shouldn't they? The one true God is unique. The Word, which becomes Jesus Christ as v 14 tells us, has always existed from all eternity as God, is in perfect fellowship with God the Father and (though not mentioned) the Holy Spirit and is Himself eternally God.

Verse 18 also points to this unique nature of God as a tri-unity – three in one. **READ v 18.** No one has ever seen God, that is the full essence of God the Father. But the one and only Son who became Jesus is himself God and also in relationship to God the Father. There is only one God. But both the Son and the Father are God. Push this too far to oneness and you simply have father, son, and Holy Spirit as 3 different titles for the same person, just like I am a father, a son and a husband. But there are not 3 persons in me. Push the three too far and you have 3 gods, not One God.

Every time you picture or think about the “baby Jesus” let the wonder of that amaze you. How can that be God incarnate? Without the Trinity, there could be no incarnation. How could God empty himself to take on human form and still sustained the universe? How can Jesus be that unique that all of history revolves around Him? He is God come down in human form – that is worth a really big celebration!!

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**II. We celebrate real life**

John 1:4-5, 9

Every time that a Bible believing Christian celebrates Christmas, we also celebrate what real life is. **READ v 4-5.** What is real life? It is a question philosophers, poets and wise ones have asked through history. Clearly here, real life is in Jesus – the Eternal Word who is God and also with God. Life is our most important asset. To lose “life” is tragic.

Our society today is particularly confused about what real life is. That often comes because our culture is at the point where we decide what is significant, meaningful, and valuable for the long run by how we “feel” at a particular moment. Yet history clearly shows us that that which ends up being meaningful, significant, and valuable for the long run is rarely what is easy, comfortable, or fun at the moment. So, in a very real sense, we are in great darkness about what real life is? Is it a 52 week vacation? Is it people doing what we want them to do? Is it what feels good at the moment? We need light because light makes things clear, shows us the right way to go and opens up opportunities we would miss otherwise. When one is lost in the darkness, light brings hope! **READ v 4-5.** And then God reminds us that darkness can NEVER, EVER overcome that light of Christ and the real life it points us to. All those Christmas lights you see around remind us that
Jesus is the life giving light for ALL humans. No matter how frustrated or discouraged we are with decline in our country, workplace, school, church or family, just holding on to Jesus and His truth means we are adding to the light in the darkness. And like all those Christmas lights around us, we don’t have to be powerful spotlights, but God has made us each a little different like the effect of multi-color and multi-sized lights around. They point us back to hope – hope in Jesus!

III. We celebrate our Creator

**John 1:3, 10**

Every time that a Bible believing Christian celebrates Christmas, we are also celebrating our Creator. **READ v 3.** The fingerprints of the eternal Son of God are on everything that has been made. Because He is Creator, he knows just what his creation’s people need.

We were all been fearfully and wonderfully made. We all have more amazing things designed into us that we can ever imagine! When we were first renovating this church building, my wife Leisa, got a blood clot from repetitive actions – it was called "effort thrombosis". At one point during treatment, they brought us in to do an ultra-sound of the blocked area. The blood clot had not dissolved as they were hoping, but Leisa’s body had already made a collateral vein to bypass the blockage and was in the process of making more. Picture her regular vein as a 4 or 6 lane interstate highway. All of a sudden, all those lanes were closed to traffic. Without any outside prompting her body quickly made a 2 lane bypass and then continued to add additional lanes to handle all the traffic in the future. When an Interstate highway becomes completely blocked in a way that can not be easily fixed, it takes humans a long time and a lot of planning, coordination and drawing to make those alternate routes from nothing, but it’s all done automatically by our body. Every Christmas as we read how Jesus’ coming fulfilled so many prophecies foretold hundreds of years before in the Old Testament we are reminded that God is at work all around us and He is our creator! All of the creative preparations & treats we do for Christmas point us to the amazingness of the creative nature of our God! We are very fearfully and wonderfully made. How great our Creator is.

IV. We celebrate sacrificial love

**John 1:10-11**

Every time that a Bible believing Christian celebrates Christmas, we are also celebrating Jesus' sacrificial love. **READ v 10-11.** Picture what is here. God has given us life itself – He has created the Universe and made the earth to uniquely sustain carbon life forms. We owe all the good of our lives to God. Yet when the creator came down to His creation, He was neither recognized nor welcomed. Jesus came into this world as an unimportant baby, born to a subjected people and then had the King send out agents to kill him. How much sacrificial love does it take to give so abundantly to those who neither recognize you or welcome you in?

When I was the house manager of a Christian co-op that I lived in at the University of Illinois, one of my fellow housemates sacrificed all of his savings for the other guys. Our house, called Koinonia, had great fellowship, cooperation and comradery, but the physical building was old and decrepit. Mothers would cry when they first left their sons
there wondering what kind of dump this was. The windows were especially old and
drafty making it difficult to heat. Then unknown to anyone else but me, one of the guys
gave a large check anonymously to pay for storm windows. It was all the money he saved
up for college and he had to drop out the next year to earn more money. He did it simply
for the rest of us – guys he had grown close to, yet knowing this very act would separate
him from us and his educational dreams for the next year. I have always been in awe of
the sacrificial love this young man showed and never received any recognition for.

When we give gifts at Christmas we like to know those gifts help the people we gave
to whether they know the gifts were from us or not. But it is really discouraging
when they trash what we sacrificed for, don’t share what we’ve freely given or ignore the
giver. **Picture being able to give a house and car to your friend.** Then years later you
stop by just needing an hour to warm-up inside and a ride into town to catch a train home.
But they ignore you, they aren’t willing to invite you in and don’t acknowledge the very
reason they have a car and warm house is because of your gift to them. That is really
ungrateful, unfair and just plain wrong. Now flip that around. What kind of sacrificial
love would it take for you to make those sacrificial gifts when you knew **that was going
to be the response**? More than we can imagine! Every gift you give and every gift you
unwrap reminds us of the incredible sacrificial gift Jesus gave by leaving the glories of
heaven to come down to offer eternal life to all, when many would ignore, oppose and
mistreat Jesus and His people. That sacrificial love is the greatest gift of all.

V. We celebrate a chance for EVERYONE  
John 1:12-13

Every time that a Bible believing Christian celebrates Christmas, we are also celebrating
that God gives everyone a chance. **READ v 12-13.** While some people didn’t receive
their creator, life-giver, God and light, some did. What is amazing in v 12-13 is how God
opens the door for ALL to come into a relationship with Him regardless of their
background, abilities, past choices, status or upbringing. We don’t have to be faster than a
speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive or able to leap tall buildings in a single
bound to be adopted as God’s child. We don’t have to achieve perfection or never sin.
We just have to receive Jesus – we need to believe in His name – we do this through
repenting of our sins, believing Jesus is God incarnate who died on the cross to pay the
penalty of our sins and then bodily rose from the dead to prove it and surrender to go the
way of our God rather than the ways of the world around us or our sinful nature inside us.

For those without parents, it is a great privilege to be adopted and get a new set of parents
& a new start. How much more with God! God gives people of any nationality, any
country, any social status, any income level, any temperament and any educational level
the same opportunity to be adopted into His family. It doesn’t matter how smart you are,
how high you can jump or how much money you have. Every human on planet earth has
the opportunity to be adopted as God’s child and come into a restored relationship with
the Lord of the Universe! Each Christmas as we give to those that don’t have the same
opportunities that we might, we are reminded how incredible God is to give us all the
opportunity to be rescued, redeemed, transformed and accepted in God’s family!
VI. We celebrate the glorious God pursuing a relationship with us

Every time that a Bible believing Christian celebrates Christmas, we are also celebrating that the glorious God is pursuing a relationship with us. In this sense, no human is unwanted – although we can ignore, rebel and snub the One pursuing us. **READ v 14a.**

God takes the first step. He came down and took on human form (that’s what it means to become flesh), and specifically dwelt among us (more literally pitched His tent among us). God could have made us do some daring feat of bravery, some sacrificial act of love or some humble deed of service before He would consider whether to adopt us as one of His children and have a genuine personal relationship with Him. But He didn’t! **God took the initiative.** God comes to where we are. God speaks in a way we can understand.

Picture those shepherds in the fields watching over their flocks at night. Most people of the day looked down on shepherds – people didn’t speak of them well. There were a number of reasons for this, some deserved. God sends His angels visibly down to them so they, these despised and looked down on, can witness a miracle – the coming of the promised Messiah. God pursued those shepherds, just as God pursues us today. There is no human who is unwanted in God’s sight even though other humans may not want us. We can’t be too bad to come in faith to Jesus, only too stubborn or too prideful. We can’t be too insignificant or to unqualified to come in faith to Jesus, only too arrogant or full of ourselves. If God pursues us, then we are not unwanted. Christmas reminds us again and again of just how wide open God’s arms are for the nobodies of this world.

VII. We celebrate the grace & truth He gives us

Finally every time that the Bible believing Christian celebrates Christmas, we are celebrating both the grace and truth that brings us. Notice these words “grace” and “truth” repeated in the final verses we are reading. **READ v 14b-17 (skip v 15).**

Grace gives us something we haven’t earned – truth shows us something clearly so we can know the best way to go. Jesus came down to this earth to bring BOTH grace & truth.

Every time we look at presents under the tree for us, we are reminded of the many gifts of grace God gives to us, starting with life itself. I love the picture of God giving gifts again and again and again. Grace is a freely given gift! First, this grace comes out of God’s fullness (“Out of His fullness we have all received”). Jesus is not a miser. Jesus doesn’t calculate how these rich gifts can maximize His own position or how much we have already gotten. There is no end to God’s resources. Jesus gives out of the fullness of God! Wow! Second, these grace gifts keep coming and coming. (“we have all received grace in place of grace already given” – some of your translations say “grace for grace” or “grace upon grace”). This never hit me much until I personally started to visualize pictures of what “grace upon grace” or “grace in place of the grace already given” might look like in other areas.

I love the outdoors. I love oceans, lakes, streams and rivers. I especially love MOVING WATER. I love just sitting, watching and listening to the endless movement of water whether it is at the ocean, in a brook or over a waterfall. The waves never end, the water
going over the falls keeps coming and coming, the babbling brook keeps babbling. That
is the picture here. Grace is followed by more grace, which is followed by more grace like
moving water. God’s love continuing to flow into our lives without end. God’s mercies
are new every day. His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is
His faithfulness (Ecc 3:22-23). There is not an end to God’s grace!

Jesus also brings us truth because He is the truth. We’ve talked a little about this when we
talked about Jesus bringing us light. The light illuminates what is actually true! Truth
never changes. Ignoring the truth always leads to pain and problems. I’ll add a couple
more truths Christmas points us to each year ...

- **God doesn’t love me or care for me** – that’s not true because Jesus gave up
  the glories of Heaven to come down and bring us grace & truth. Like the
  shepherds no one is too insignificant or despised or messed up for God. He
  reaches out to every person – and we ALL far short of His glory!
- **God is remote and the best we can hope for is that God might accept that
  we tried to do good** – Jesus came down to “tent with us” for more than 30
  years so we could see clearly the path He makes for an unholy, mortal person to
  have a genuine, rich, personal relationship with the Holy, Infinite God. Ours is
  not a hope we might go to heaven, it is an assurance we will go to heaven
  because it is based on what Jesus did on the cross by dying for our sins and
  rising from the dead – not on us always doing things right!
- **God isn’t real** – Many of those in Bethlehem completely missed the coming of
  their Messiah or Christ. That did not mean Jesus didn’t come! God is not only
  real, He is incredibly active in our world today far beyond what we could think
  or imagine.
- **Life, my life, is hopeless** – in Jesus, things will be hard, but they are never
  hopeless. No one could envision what God would do through the birth of this
  tiny baby. But then we really can’t imagine One leaving the perfection and
  peace of heaven to come down to people who were made by Him, but who
  would totally ignore Him!

I think a picture that CS Lewis developed in the Chronicles of Narnia summarize how
Christmas can be deeper, richer, and point more to Jesus year after year – no matter how
many times we go back to the key 88 verses of Christmas or how messed up society
twists Christmas. In the Chronicles of Narnia, the lion Aslan represents Jesus. Lucy
especially loves Aslan with her child-like faith. Interestingly her picture of Aslan keeps
growing each time she sees Him.

“Welcome, child,” he said. “Aslan,” said Lucy, “you’re bigger.”
“That is because you are older, little one,” answered he. “Not because you are?”
“I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger.”

May each of your Christmases enlarge your vision of Jesus a little more each year!