



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WE NEED CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR

We should be struck by the handiwork of God and become more aware of the wonders that surround us. Life itself is a gift that countless people miss and take for granted. So many family and neighbors are not here this year to celebrate the holiday.

Evangelist Billy Graham said that unless you feed your soul, it will become weak. Graham was right. We all have to nourish our souls. For many, scripture guides us on how to handle this world we live in, how we meet the challenges we go through in life, and it helps many get through some tough times. It helps us do what is right, even if others tell us otherwise.

I am grateful that God did not put me here on earth and simply leave me alone on a planet without guidance, or to be alone. Wisdom tells us that we alone should be the ones to shape our own lives, and not others. Yet we gladly surrender our will and conform to others to fit in.

Even if life is going smoothly, often we can feel like something's missing. It is at those times when it seems that nothing will satisfy us that we struggle to find peace within ourselves. That is what keeps us longing for more things. When we become dependent on our possessions, we let them control us. When we become dependent on our possessions, we lose our freedom. There is no better time to be reminded of that truth than at Christmas. It is the season where we highlight our giving to others. It is not about possessions. Educators, Military, and Frontline Healthcare Workers have given the most this year and we are grateful.

Jesus, as a child in the manger, became the Christ who took the blame, suffered and died for our sins. Some people seem to think they can take credit for religious acts and be rewarded for good deeds. If that were the case Jesus would not have had to die on a cross. Jesus brought freedom. The singer Bono said: "I believe in the poetic genius of a creator who would choose to express such unfathomable power as a child born in straw poverty."

The greatest gift we ever receive from God is the most extraordinary: Grace. Grace has been there all along. Grace finds goodness in everything. Amid a global pandemic, so many heroes have emerged. As Martin Luther King Jr. identified so powerfully, "There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies."

It is a time of the season where we all become a little more self-reflective of ourselves and the world around us. Many are looking forward to Christmas. Let's be honest, we need Christmas this year to remind ourselves there is still goodness among us. In 2020, we have all had a lot of time to contemplate so many things. Many people were scared and hurt this year.

SUMMARY

2020 has been challenging for everyone. We need Christmas this year more than ever.

Some days are better than others in our lives, and this year many days have been challenging for all. We have experienced sickness, watched friends and family who may have hurt you or are themselves in pain. And we have witnessed death. Every day lost in a world of struggle and despair, unfolding somewhere is a story of restoration. People have hope that they can endure and conquer dark times.

The late author Brennan Manning said, "I have a word for you. I know your whole life story. I know every skeleton in your closet. I know every moment of sin, shame, dishonesty, and degraded love that has darkened your past. Right now, I know your shallow faith, your feeble prayer life, your inconsistent discipleship. And my word is this: I dare you to trust that I love you just as you are, and not as you should be. Because you're never going to be as you should be."

God loves you as you are and not as you should be. If we are honest and willing to be vulnerable, we acknowledge that we all struggle with destructive tendencies. God loves us no matter what we have done, or more importantly, what we continue to do.

Despite the problems we face or our extraordinary failures, difficulties are when many seek God. Grace makes beauty out of ugly things. Our lives are living testaments to redemption and the love of a living God. I thank God that He is a God of Grace, and not a God of Karma. This year, I reflect on that truth more than ever before. Michael Basse Johnson astutely points out: "Education will teach you ephemeral things. God will teach you wonders." I am amazed by His Grace. We need Christmas.

#####

JC Bowman is the Executive Director of Professional Educators of Tennessee, a non-partisan teacher association headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided that the author and the association are properly cited. For more information on this subject or any education issue please contact Professional Educators of Tennessee. To schedule an interview please contact communications@proedtn.org or 1-800-471-4867.

