

KNOWING & DOING

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Scrooges, Traditionalists and Nicholases

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“Merry Christmas! Long live the true King!” These are the parting words of Father Christmas to Peter, Susan, Lucy, and Mr. and Mrs. Beaver after leaving them with magical gifts in the land of Narnia. The arrival of Father Christmas or St. Nicholas, as he’s called by some in our world, is one of the signs to the inhabitants of Narnia that Aslan is on the move to free the land from the White Witch – a country in which “it was always winter and never Christmas.”

Like Narnia, we have people in our world today who have different takes on Christmas. The first group is made up of the “Scrooges” who, like the White Witch, don’t like Christmas and in fact at times are downright antagonistic toward the celebration of Christ’s birth. An example is a group of atheists called the American Humanist Association who paid to place ads on buses in Washington, D.C. in 2008 that read, “Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness’ sake.” Interestingly, this ad received over 250 complaints and only one compliment according to the Metro bus authority. I think that this is due to the fact that only a small percentage of people in America don’t believe in God.

The majority of people probably fall into a second group called the “Traditionalists”, who love the trappings, customs, music, food, and colors of Christmas. After all, what’s not to like about stories such as, “Twas the Night Before Christmas,” the sound of Bing Crosby singing, “White Christmas,” or drinking a refreshing glass of egg nog while sitting around a crackling fire and a sparkling Christmas tree? And don’t forget about the fun of exchanging presents and the after-Christmas sales! These traditions aren’t bad in and of themselves, but they can distract us from the main person and message of Christmas.

In a letter to an American friend, C.S. Lewis wrote, “My brother heard a woman on a ‘bus say, as the ‘bus passed a church with a Crib outside it, ‘Oh Lor’! They bring religion into everything. Look – they’re dragging it even into Christmas now!’” Many would like to keep religion out of their celebration of Christmas.

This leaves the third group of people, the Nicholases, who have a great message for the other two groups. These are true followers of Jesus Christ who, like the real St. Nicholas or like Father Christmas in Narnia, understand the real meaning of Christmas and actively share it with others.

As C.S. Lewis put it in *Mere Christianity*, it is the story of how “The Son of God became a man to enable men to become the sons of God.”

This Christmas season, let’s commit to being like St. Nicholas who actively shared his love for Jesus through both his words and gift-giving. The Scrooges and Traditionalists are in need of a Savior. So, let’s actively and fearlessly share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and cry out together, “Merry Christmas! Long live the True King!” ■■



Joel Woodruff, President, C.S. Lewis Institute, has worked in higher education, “tent-making,” nonprofit administration, and pastoral ministries in Alaska, Israel, Hungary, France, and Northern Virginia. He served as Dean of Students, Chaplain, and Professor of Bible & Theology at European Bible Institute, where he helped train Europeans both for professional ministry and to be Christian leaders in the marketplace. Prior to joining the Institute, he was on the leadership team of Oakwood Services International, a nonprofit educational and humanitarian organization. He is a graduate of Wheaton College, earned his M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and has a doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University. As a Parish-Pulpit Fellow, he studied Biblical Backgrounds & Archaeology in Israel for a year.

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