

PFOX

DECEMBER 2023

The Official Newsletter of Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays

Christmas Blessings and Challenges

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Why do we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, which we call Christmas?

It's because our Savior was literally born to *save* us. It's all about life—and life after death.

With Christmas celebrated this month, and with the world's attention focused on Israel's war with Hamas, it seems appropriate for us to reflect on Christianity's deep Jewish roots.

Here is an abbreviated tutorial from oneforisrael.org, a messianic Jewish site:

"Perhaps you have heard the Jewish exclamation, 'L'chaim!' It means 'To life!' and is said as a toast, where in English we might say 'To your health!' or 'Cheers!'"

"The Hebrew word for life has a special ending . . . chaim means specifically two lives, which speaks of God's plan for our life here on earth, and the life to come.

"When we discover our Messiah and redeemer, Yeshua [Jesus], we pass from death to life and enjoy the double blessing of life that God desires for us."

We give gifts at Christmas because God gave us the ultimate gift—his Son Jesus, Who gives truth and everlasting life to all who believe and take a knee—out of respect, not rebellion.



Pointing the Way to Truth

Some people sadly think that truth is only what they feel is important for their lives. This self-centeredness separates them from God. So, how do we reach people stuck in their own version of 'truth'?

In an interview with Sean McDowell about his new book, *"Is God Real?"* author Lee Strobel had some thoughts.

Strobel: it's a matter of engaging people where they are at, asking questions

about where they are at, to get them to unveil the spiritual sticky point.

McDowell: In the 1960s to 1980s there was an assumption that there was such a thing as truth, we can know it and we should follow it. The question today is where does the evidence point to it? The idea was that the problem was external. Now things have shifted to much more subjective—internally. In fact, to not affirm someone's internal identification and their beliefs about

themselves is considered kind of a sin today.

Strobel: Look at questions for livability and logic, and worldviews. Truth is what is consistent with reality, what is consistent with what we see in the world. What is actual. Start at truth and work the conversation through that. Then move to worldviews . . . Every worldview has to deal with the existence of evil and suffering. It's not just confined to a problem of Christianity... It is important to remember that God is the illustration of a perfect relationship of love. Love is the ultimate value in the universe. Real love involves the choice to love or not to love . . . God can use the difficulties in our life for good. People are drawn to Christ in the middle of pain and suffering. They seek God in ways they never would have before.

John 16:33 says: ***"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."***

A Holiday Home Question

Often, parents will ask us: "My (LGBTQ+) identified child wants to come home for the holidays, with their partner. I fear that if we don't welcome them both, my child will stop visiting us altogether. What should the family do?"

This is a sticky wicket, as the British say. Their coming together, unrepented, does impact the peace of the family at Christmas. It's perfectly respectable and biblical to ask that if they stay under your roof, they must maintain the morals of your home. That means, at the least, separate sleeping quarters.

You have the right as parents to set reasonable boundaries for your home. Another important one involves displays of affection. There's quite a difference between a holiday hug and a



relationship hug. Make sure your loved one knows your convictions so he or she can honor them.

Parents need to take a stand against inappropriate displays of affection as they would do if the loved one was in an opposite-sex relationship—even more so when the relationship is very clearly not God-honoring. There may be a lot of resistance. It's important to remain consistent biblically while demonstrating deep love for your child.

In all things, trust in God to be working, even when your loved one expresses bitterness toward you. Don't ever lose hope. Your Christian love and influence will live on—and impact them the rest of their lives.

Your child and his or her partner can benefit from seeing what a healthy, Godly way of living looks like.

It's good to revisit one of the best-known stories in the Bible: The Prodigal Son. He returns home because he knows that his Father will welcome him regardless of the son's own sinful behavior. Home is a safe place because the Father acts in the way God loves us.

Some parents who have been part of the PFOX parent group attend Christmas at their child's house. That presents a new set of challenges, such as whether to leave or stay if things get difficult. It's good to remember that the person in a relationship with your child is someone else's child. This person also needs to see and hear the truth of God's love.

Jesus had no problem eating with sinners, yet He never condoned sin, and His overwhelming love offered freedom.

May the peace of Jesus fill your heart this Christmas. Please pray for Israel and for Palestinian people caught up in the conflict.

Where to Get Help

At PFOX, we know this can be a long journey. You're not alone. Our website (pfox.org) has lots of helpful materials.

We offer a **Parent Support Phone Conference call** on the **2nd & 4th Mondays** of each month and **Zoom calls** on the **third Wednesday** of each month. E-mail info4pfox@gmail.com for more info.

Thanks much for your support and have a blessed Christmas!

Flo

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