

When It Doesn't Feel Like Christmas

By Dan Schaeffer

Part 1: Something Different, Something Deeper

The message of Christmas is about hope. But sometimes "it doesn't feel like Christmas." It doesn't feel hopeful. Sometimes life conspires to challenge the Christmas message of "good news of great joy." Each culture has its own traditions surrounding Christmas. While many of these traditions have little to do with God entering our world, they have become so inextricably intertwined with our Christmas celebrations that it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to separate the truth of Christmas from the traditions we have grown up with. For example, in the West, Christmas has become a time of family celebration with food, presents, and parties. So when the painful reality of life interrupts our celebrations of the Christmas season, when we lose some of these traditional supports, we believe we cannot experience the spirit of Christmas. For years the Christmas spirit has meant an immersion in the festal garb of the season - the colors, lights, decorations, songs, presents, family get-togethers - and yes, the story of the Babe in the manger. But the Christmas story, the real story, has become a sidelight to our celebration. It is important, but not absolutely essential. We could actually get through the season with great joy, celebration, and treasured memories without seriously considering the implications of the entrance of God into our world. A simple nod to "the reason behind the season" would suffice - even a brief one. Millions of Christians do it every year and appear none the worse for it.

But what happens when a broken family or the aching loss of a loved one or deteriorating health or fragmented and painful relationships conspire to wipe away our joy? At such times we begin to see how far we have strayed from the true message of this blessed season. What we need is something different, something deeper. Author and speaker Jill Briscoe recalls being asked to speak to a church gathering in Croatia for two hundred newly arrived refugees. They were mostly women, because the men were either dead, or in camp, or fighting. That evening she told the refugees about Jesus, who as a baby became a refugee Himself. He was hunted by soldiers, and His parents had to flee to Egypt at night, leaving everything behind. Sensing that her audience was listening intently, she continued telling them about Jesus' life, and when she got to the cross, she said, "He hung there for you." At the end of the message, she said, "All these things have happened to you. You are homeless. You have had to flee. You have suffered unjustly. But you didn't have a choice. He had a choice. He knew all this would happen to Him, but He still came." Then she told them why. Many of the refugees knelt down, put their hands up, and wept. "He's the only one who really understands," she concluded. This is the part of the Christmas story that is often neglected. God had a choice, and He chose to become a vulnerable human child. He chose to come to earth and suffer and die. We can decorate His entrance into the world with festive angels and stars. But those decorations cannot mask the purpose of His entrance - to suffer and die for us.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH BELEN

Pastor David Guerrero . Pastor Ernest Sanchez

December 6, 2020

"Come, let us worship
and bow down,
Let us kneel before the **LORD**
our Maker."

Psalms 95:6

Welcome to Church!

If you are a first time visitor, please fill out a "Connect Card" and visit our Connection Desk. We would love an opportunity to get to know you better and encourage you in your spiritual walk, as well as answer any questions! Contact Information for our Pastoral and Office Staff is provided on our website at www.fbcbelen.net, or you may call us at 864-8621.

Lottie Moon
Week of Prayer:

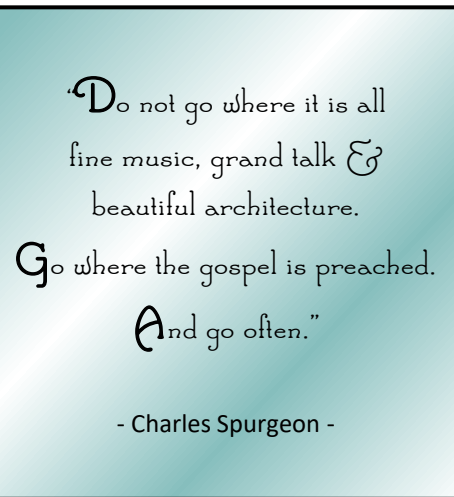
November 29th - December 6th.

Prayer Guides are available at
the Connection Desk.

**Lottie Moon Christmas
Offering Collection dates:**

December 6th - 27th.

Please be in prayer:
International Missions.



Baby Church: The P - 5 class-
room is open to all parents/
grandparents with babies.

Sermon Notes and Children's
Bulletins are available at the
Connection Center Desk.

Church Office Hours

Monday: 1-4:30 pm . Tuesday - Thursday: 8:30 am - 4:30 pm . Friday: Closed

Activities for the Week

Sunday - December 6th

Spanish Bible Study - 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service - 10:30 a.m.

Young Adults @ the Sanchez'
home - 7:00 p.m.

Monday - December 7th

Tuesday - December 8th

Wednesday - December 9th

Deaf Fellowship - 5:30 p.m.

Children's Ministry

Rooted Youth

Adult Bible Study

6:00 p.m.

Thursday - December 10th

'till Saturday - December 12th

Operation Christmas Child
Trip to Denver

Deacons of the Week:

Deck Goodman

Red Flett

Safety Team - December 13th:

Terrence Bock

Jeremy Bock

Cindy Tinnin

Give the Gift of Words...

**You can send a personalized Christmas Message to
all of our Church Family on our website!**

Every year we have exchanged Christmas cards and have contributed the funds saved by "mailing" them at our Lottie Moon Mailbox, to our Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. This year, things are a little harder. Not all can come and participate in our card exchange. However, all can email, text, mail in or call in to our Church Office, a personal Christmas message to your Church Family. Your message can be one line or a few paragraphs. We will post it on our website, and you can make a donation for the "postage" to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering!

Email: info@fbcbelen.net / **Text:** 859-0622 / **Call:** 864-8621

Mailing Address: 115 S 4th ST Belen, NM 87002

LOOKING AHEAD...

OCC Trip to Denver

December 10th - 12th

Please be in prayer for those traveling.

WMU

Wednesday, December 16th at 5:00 p.m.

Finance Team Meeting

Thursday, December 17th at 4:00 p.m.



- Offering Boxes are located in the back of the Sanctuary
for your Tithes/Offerings/Prayer Requests -

If you would like to receive Church information/news/updates,
please contact the Church Office (864-8621)
to submit your email address and phone number.