

Discussion Guide: “Five Aspects of Christmas”

*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance:
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.
1 Timothy 1:15 (NIV)*

December 7, 2003: Today Kimber Kauffman, Senior Pastor College Park Church, delivered what he called a “shotgun sermon” in delivering a message on five aspects of the Christmas season in a humorous yet meaningful way.

1. *The Danger of Christmas Cookies:*

Kimber related Christmas cookies (Dainty Morsels) to gossip. They are both delicious on your lips, but can have serious consequences.

The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.
Proverbs 18:8 (NIV)

Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down. As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts. Proverbs 26:20-22 (NIV)

Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.
Proverbs 17:28 (NIV)

Referring to James 3:3-8, pastor encouraged us to think this Christmas as we reach for those dainty morsels, and remember to control our tongues. Don't speak evil of anyone!!! Don't get caught in the trap of running others down. Many get into such trouble by only listening to one side of the story. Like a match that starts a forest fire, or a rudder on a ship that sends a ship off course, so to can choice morsels of gossip destroy things in their path.

Discussion Question: During this holiday season, can you predict situations in which it may be tempting to gossip? How might you refrain from gossiping?

Discussion Question: How do you usually respond when someone shares a piece of gossip with you, or tempts you to gossip? What does the Bible say about how to respond to that person?

**Note to Flock Group leaders – You may want to role-play common situations in which someone is tempted to gossip, and share some Biblical responses.*

2. *The Omniscience of Santa Claus:*

“He knows when you are sleeping
He knows when you're awake
He knows if you've been bad or good...
...so be good for *goodness* sake...” [or as Kimber suggests...for Jesus sake]

This well-known Christmas song is referring to Santa Claus, but there is one very real person, Jesus Christ, who always knows what we will do even before we think of doing it. Kimber shared some scriptures with us that speak of human goodness (Hosea 6:4-6 and

John 2:24-25). Our goodness is as fleeting as a morning cloud or the morning dew, gone before we know it.

True goodness comes from God as he empowers and encourages us to practice real Christianity. It is the result of real authentic Christian living for Christ: denying self, sacrificing your desires for doing God's will, following Christ, drawing upon him for strength and help, encouraging and being encouraged by fellow Christians, etc. And when we fail we get back up, repent, ask for forgiveness, and endeavor to keep going with a renewed mind to live our life for Christ.

Titus 3:8 reminds us that we must devote ourselves to doing good. Devoting yourself to goodness requires effort and diligence on a regular (daily, hourly, minute by minute) basis.

Discussion Question: How can we devote ourselves to being/doing good?

Discussion Question: What does real authentic Christian living look like?

Discussion Question: What does "take up your cross" mean to you?

3. Rembrandt's Crucifixion:

Rembrandt's painting of The Crucifixion gave us some insight into who put Jesus on the cross. In the painting, Jesus is being nailed to the cross by a man who is kneeling at his feet while another man stands behind them. Kimber gave us a close-up look at the men in the painting: the man standing behind is actually looking at the viewer of the painting as if to say, "you had a part in this;" and the man who is nailing Jesus to the cross is actually Rembrandt himself, as if to say, "I have put Jesus on the cross." The reality is that Jesus came at Christmas to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). The only reason that He came was to die for us. You and I put Him on the cross.

Note: See http://www.bsmi.org/images/rembrandt_raising_of_the_cross.jpg for picture.

Discussion Question: How can you, during this Christmas season, share this life-saving truth with someone you know?

4. Giving Mary Her Due:

Some church traditions have honored Mary, Jesus' mother, more than is mandated by Scripture. The Protestant Church (which includes College Park), perhaps in reaction to the previous idea, has neglected to honor her as we should: Mary is, after all, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pastor Kauffman told us that he will deliver a message on this topic on Sunday Dec. 21st.

5. Eternity: The Sparrow and the Sand

Try to imagine a bucket of sand on the beach. Now picture a sparrow that picks up one grain of sand and carries it to the desert. The sparrow returns to the bucket, taking one grain at a time. Can you comprehend how long it would take until the sparrow not only empties the bucket, but removes all of the sand from all of the beaches in all the earth? Pastor said that that would only be the beginning of the length of eternity (if it had a beginning). It's Mind-boggling! We must live our lives with eternity in mind. All of eternity is affected by this life.

Discussion Question: How should this view of eternity affect the way we live this life?