

## Holidays and Evangelism Opportunities William C. Sexton

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The holidays mean different things to different people. The season of Christmas is viewed differently by religious people. However, with many it has a religious connotation, and people in general are in a different mood around this time of the year. Also, the beginning of the New Year has many connotations that provide an opportunity for evangelistic discussions that are not so available at other times.

As members of the Lord's church, citizens of the Kingdom of Christ, we know that the Bible does not speak of Christmas. There are many ideas associated with Christmas that causes different reactions. There are "Christians" who see so many pagan things associated with Christmas, that they have little to do with celebrating the season, and are in a mind set to speak and react relative to, other than take a day off from work/business, and meet with family members. Of course, the meeting with the family and showing love, respect, and concern is always good. That is something to be commended and evaluated in a positive way. We, "Christians" ought to see this as an opportunity to extol the value of the family, as God created it. Let us identify and speak positively of "family values."

Then there are those who try to put Christ in Christmas and have various church activities - making it a very religious season. I cannot and do not participate in that, because I see no authorization in God's word for doing so (**Col. 3:17; Matt 21:23-27**). However, I recognize that you may feel differently, and I'd be glad to have your feed back, and perhaps discuss in a one on one basis with you concerning the matter.

Let us all have an optimistic attitude and show respect for each other, but let us make ourselves available and feel free to speak openly of the opportunities we are afforded by the present environment.

There are many activities that I see people participate in during the holiday season, which anyone familiar with the Bible knows, has no place in any one's life -- such as the consumption of alcoholic beverages, carousing and using foul language that is unfit for any human to speak. Stories are told that have no value to convey to the hearers. Let us be determined to have no part in such, and perhaps look for opportunities to turn the discussion in a constructive way.

But, the point of this article is to look for opportunities that exist for disciples of the lord to speak of the Lord's message of salvation, let our light shine (Matt 5:13-16). We should look for and seize opportunities, so as to influence and persuade people to examine the Lord's plan and possibly yield their lives to Him (**Rom. 6:16-18**).

Notice the commission of the Lord to the apostles, and then how that spreads to ALL CHRISTIANS, including you and me, if INDEED we are followers of His:

**Matt 28:18-20** - "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, `All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.'"

**Acts 8:4** - "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word."

**2 Tim. 2:2** - "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

### Suggestions:

1. As we meet with family, there will in many instances be people present who are not "Christians." We may have the opportunity to engage them in a friendly loving serious conversation about the message of Christ. At least they can observe our positive attitude, and our mind set to focus on spiritual matters,
2. In as much as many people have a mind set (are in a "Christmas mood") causing them to be more receptive to the idea of Christianity, let's be postured to act. Why not take advantage of that fact and ask questions and perhaps make statements related to Christ?
3. Regardless of your view relative to the extent you can in good conscience participate in the activities, it can be an occasion to raise questions as to what the season means to different people, even us. Having the truth (**Jn. 8:32**) at our disposal, we can plant kernels of truth, that may grow, develop into something that is good, healthy, spiritually.

\*Initiating the conversation -- introduce the subject of Christ and His plan; the influence He and His followers have had on the world over the last 1900 years.

\*Focus on the matter of spiritual/eternal substance or re-focus, as did Christ with the woman at the well. (**Jn. 4:7ff**). Look at other examples of HOW He turned conversations into a more productive vein -- from physical/materials to spirituality!

\*Use things of the present, as did Christ -- when in the temple, etc., to call attention to the difference in the way things ARE and in the way they could/should be, if ALL would turn to Christ and accept His will, practice the same. (**Matt 24:1ff; Jn. 2:13ff**). I've always been impressed with the method (approach) Christ used, to take whatever the situation was and turn it into a discussion of things on a higher plane. Often, contrasting the difference between God's plan/teachings and what the people had accepted or were practicing! He wanted them to SEE the different SOURCES and DESTINES involved. If you have read the Gospels closely, surely you have noticed that, too, and been impressed!

\*There are people who have no family or have family problems and feel alienated - - they are sad. More people commit suicide at this time of the year, I understand, than at any other time. That should awaken us to look for people who are having a sad experience, and try to provide some comfort, point them to the SOURCE OF ALL COMFORT (**2 Cor. 1:3**).

Point to the person of Jesus Christ and the large-size of His family -- such provides an opportunity for evangelism, perhaps.

### Orientation:

Some may be thinking -- WHAT IS EVANGELISM, anyway? Are you just thinking about getting people "in Your church"? No! That's not what I'm thinking about or encouraging each of us to be sensitive to. Evangelism is the concept of presenting people with the GOOD NEWS of Christ (**1 Cor. 15:1ff**) as did Paul and others as recorded in the New Testament! Christ gave Himself for all (**Heb. 2:9; 1 Jn. 2:2**). It's a great privilege to say COME (Rev. 22:17) The GRACE of God that brings salvation has appeared to all --being

available to each person, regardless of his/her gender, race, social standing, etc. (**Titus 2:11ff**).

Be ABLE and WILLING to make the distinction between TRADITION (**Matt 15:1-9**) and the Scriptures. That was where Christ focused His attention, addressing and challenging people. If we would follow His example (**1 Pet. 2:21**), we must do the same. There's so much in the religious community that is NOT scripture, and many fail to make the distinction. Of course if we are unable to make that distinction, we're in no position to help others see and apply the teachings so as to have their lives changed! We do not have the right to alter the scriptures; tradition, if and when it contradicts (sets aside) the teaching of scripture (**Matt. 15:3-4; Mk. 7: 8-9**), is VAIN! If we would help people, we have to KNOW the difference, and be able to call such to the attention of others, being motivated by LOVE!

### Opportunities:

1. Look for family members who we may not have seen for awhile, and possibly won't see again (**Acts 20:36-38**). Take advantage of their presence to bring up the truth about Christ and His loving sacrifice for all mankind. Raise the question IF he/she has given adequate attention to such? If they have in fact committed their life to Christ -- by believing in His Sonship (**Jn., 8:24**), confessing their faith (**Rom. 10:9-10**), repenting of their sins (**Acts 17:30-31**), and being baptized in water (**Acts 10:47-48**) to have their sins forgiven (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**), to be identified with Christ (**Rom. 6:3-40**, to become a child of God "by faith" (**Gal. 3:26-27**).

2. Look for people who feel the need of a family, feel lonely, sad, and help them see the large family of Christians, who would appreciate being able to share their love, recognize them as a brother or sister, if they'd be born of water and the Spirit (**Jn. 3:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:22-23**), through obedience to the gospel. Most of all let us help them see how God's love for them is demonstrated in the gift of His Son for us all (Them included!) It seems that most everyone is caused to value themselves more when they see that others really do LOVE THEM! They can then see a great purpose in living, being active in His work, association with other of "Like precious faith" (**2 Pet. 1:1**).

Yes, I believe the opportunities are many in this season (as in all seasons, really) particularly.

Perhaps there are people in need -- physically, financially, etc. -- that we individually could show our Christ-like-spirit by assisting them (**Lk. 10:30-37**). However, at this time of the year, this kind of assistance (physical and/or material need) is ALL that some think about doing. Let us, recognize that there is something BETTER that we can do (**Cf. Acts 3:6ff**), by assisting in EVANGELISM -- helping people FIND Christ and COMMIT their lives to Him, or perhaps be RESTORED (**Gal. 6:1ff**).

May each have a happy and merry season in contemplating the opportunities the Lord provides us with! May the word's of Paul be achieved in all:

**2 Cor. 13:14** - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."