

Our Christmas Story

Looking at Christmas

- busy schedule
- many traditions
- creation of memories, good and bad

Taking Intentional Steps for Christmas

With the Visual

With the Verbal

Being Intentional

Deuteronomy 6:4-9...

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Joshua 4:1-8...

“When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, ² “Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, ³ and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests’ feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’” ⁴ Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. ⁵ And Joshua said to them,

“Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, ⁶ that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ ⁷ then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

1. With The Visual

- God encouraged visual signs and reminders
 - Passover
 - Sign of the Covenant
 - Markers and Monuments
 - Ceremonies and Celebrations
- many examples of using the physical to serve as a sign, witness and reminder

Jesus in Matthew 26:26-30...

“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

a) Love the Visible with Christmas

- nativity set - prophecy fulfilled
- lights – light of the world come down
- star – God's visible announcement
- gifts – symbol of God's gift to us
- holiday time – significance of stopping

*Question – are your visuals pointing to the meaning of Christmas, chosen with care and set for all to see and know?

2. With the Verbal

- 1 Peter 3:15-16...

“¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

a) know the story

- 'teach them diligently to your children, talk about them when.....'
- 'when your children ask in time to come what those stones mean, you shall tell them...'
- to tell the story – you must know it well
- discover the setting, the promise, the prophecies, those who saw and celebrated, the work of God in deliverance. You cannot share what you have not taken the time to discover.

b) know how it affects your story

- in some ways – know your ‘so what’
- how has Christ’s birth affected your personal story? The trajectory of your life?
- choose visuals that relate to points in your story, and the story of Jesus arrival

c) get prepared to share it

- when asked
- with those important to you
- prayerfully with those God brings

3. Be Intentional

- 2 Cor. 5:18-20...

“¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.”

a) Takes Time

- look intently – visuals, story, history
- listen – to Holy Spirit, questions from others, opportunities to share
- engage in conversation – takes time with people, purpose to show visuals and relate what they mean to you with others

b) Takes Courage

- vulnerable – others can reject your story
- hard to be public about your story

c) Takes Prayer

- Col. 4:3-5...

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

So What?

1. Our Lives are Lived Before Others

- clear in scripture that we are encouraged to use the visual, at home and with others
- where can you use them in renewing, teaching and pointing to truth?

2. We are to 'be prepared' to give a reason

- do you invest time in 'knowing' the story?
- are you willing to speak into the opportunity?

3. Are you willing to be intentional this season?

- time is always an issue, will you invest?
- courage is never easy, will you risk?
- prayer works, will you ask?