

Thinking about Christmas – Back to Basics

(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)

Thinking about life as a student in healthcare

One advantage of having long semesters and/or electives over the December/January period during your clinical years, is the ability to maintain contact with your classmates within your familiar university context as Christmas approaches.

1. Think of how you feel when the subject of Christmas arises.
Do you feel pressure, and/or slightly embarrassed, and/or a desire to leave the conversation, and/or the possibility of an evangelistic opportunity?

What does God have to say?

Read Isaiah 9:6-7 (and if you have time, Isaiah 9:1-7 for the full passage).

Isaiah 9:6-7 is written as the culmination of a word of hope to the Jewish nation when they were in the midst of a terrible plight. Isaiah 8:19-22 speaks of a downward spiral of God's people as they chase alternative spiritualities and occult practices, and become trapped in darkness, rage and despair. There is a dreadful sense of God giving people over to their choices, even if the consequences are dire. Isaiah 9:1-2 speaks of these dire consequences as being humiliation, darkness and death.

BUT in God's generosity He will not let His people perish. He will provide a way for the people to be illuminated of their error and be drawn back to God, the source of life (Isaiah 9:2).

And God's provision of this victory will be from a surprising source, as surprising as the defeat of the powerful Midian army by Gideon and his very small number of trumpet blowing men (Isaiah 9:4).

Indeed, God's provision will be that of a child!

BUT this child will be called, 'Mighty God' and 'Everlasting Father', he will come from the line of King David, and he will establish peace and a kingdom of justice and righteousness.

REFERENCE: PATSTON, K., 'ISAIAH: SURPRISING SALVATION', (SYDNEY SOUTH: AQUILA PRESS, 2010).

Putting it into practice

1. Having just read Isaiah 9:6-7, what is the message of Christmas in 25 words or less?
2. Do you really think Jesus is the best gift in the world? If yes, why?
3. What are the opportunities that God may present to you amongst your current classmates and future work colleagues to talk about Christmas?
How can we use these opportunities such that we talk about the great gift of Jesus to our colleagues, moving beyond the talk of family/traditions/going away, etc?

Bible Bites

(Suitable to be completed over approximately 20-25 minutes by a group or an individual)

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Isaiah 9:6-7, ⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.'

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