

Wishing You & Your Family

a Merry Christmas

&

Blessed New Year

In Him, *Chuck*

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CHRISTMAS

MEANS

HOPE

CHRISTMAS MEANS HOPE

By Chuck Wolfenbarger

You can ask 10 different people on the street about the meaning of Christmas and you will get 10 different answers. Yes, most would say that we celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ; but, then each would add their spin on the whole thing.

They would emphasize the parts that are most important to them. Some would throw in their family history and maybe even some family traditions. They will talk of the days of their childhood and how they remember smells and sounds and faces.

Some will talk of sad times and lean times when there were few presents and little food. Yet, even in describing the hard times of Christmas's past, they still have a glimmer in their eyes.

That glimmer in their eyes is the glimmer of hope. So, whether in good times or bad times Christmas means hope.

It means hope because the God of the universe didn't leave His creation to make it on their own. He entered history in the person of Jesus Christ.

He didn't come as a conqueror or a king. He came as a baby.

When I see the face of any new born baby, I see a miracle. I see potential. I see a future. I see hope.

This baby, who was born in Bethlehem so long ago, was a miracle. He was the hope of the world.

When I was a kid in grade school, my teacher would make us tell the meaning of a holiday by taking the letters of a word and assigning a sentence or paragraph to each letter.

You've heard the song CHRISTMAS that starts with "C is for the Christ child." As I was thinking about Christmas meaning hope, I thought about the word HOPE. So, I will regress to my childhood and explain Christmas as HOPE. Here it goes:

H - H means that Heaven came to earth that night. It came first in the form of angels telling the shepherds that a Savior was born in Bethlehem of Judea. But Heaven really came in the form of a baby who was born in a stable. He came from heaven so we could go to heaven. He is the way to heaven.

O -O means ordinary. The Savior of the world came to ordinary everyday people. People like you and me. He came to change ordinary people into the extraordinary children of God, children who are special and gifted and useful in God's kingdom. The miracle of Christmas is not just about one miraculous birth. It is about the rebirth of anyone who would receive this hope into their life.

P -P means promise. Jesus Christ came to fulfill the promise of God that the prophets of the Old Testament talked about hundreds of years before His birth—a promise that God would send a savior, a promise that God would send light into a dark world, a promise that anyone can have a relationship with God.

As a kid, I promised by parents that my brothers and I would be good so Santa Claus would come to our house. We couldn't keep our promise. We tried but didn't make it.

But you know what? Santa Claus still came and we still got presents. We got presents because of love and grace. God always keeps His promise. Jesus Christ coming into the world is proof of that.

E -E means everyone. God does not offer hope to just certain people. Sometimes we think we have to be a special way in order to be accepted by God. Sometimes we think we must be good, but we fall short. Sometimes we think we must have it all figured out, but we never will. Sometimes we think we have to be very religious, but we can never know how much is enough. When Jesus Christ came into the world, God offered His hope to everyone and anyone would just receive it.

The classic verse from the bible about this is John 3:16. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Whosoever means everyone and anyone who will just receive it. You can't buy hope. You can't work for hope. Hope is a gift.

So this Christmas why don't you tell God that you need His Hope. Tell Him you believe that Jesus Christ came into the world as a baby and that he died on the cross for your sins and mine. That he kept His promise by rising from the dead on the third day.

Why don't you receive Him into your life — just like you reach out and receive a present at Christmas Day? It's that simple.

There was a guy in the Bible called the Apostle Paul who wrote most of the New Testament. In one of his letters to a young man named Timothy he said this: *"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope."* 1 Timothy 1:1

May God bless you and your family this Christmas. May you receive His wonderful HOPE! Amen