



Re-Present Christmas | James Powell | 12.16.2023

Weekly Study

SHARE

As group members get settled, take a few minutes to check in with everyone and see how life is going. Share an exciting story from this week, your highs and lows, an answered prayer, or something you're struggling with. If someone is really struggling, rally the group around them and take a few moments to pray over them.

What is your favorite Christmas tradition?

What are you most excited about this Christmas? What are you dreading?

What are you hoping to carry into next year? What are you hoping to leave behind?

GROW

This week we had the honor of hearing Pastor James Powell's pre-Christmas message, *Re-present Christmas*. The holiday season is supposed to be an opportunity to come together with friends and family as we celebrate the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ. For some, it's a season filled with fond memories, deep gratitude, and tremendous joy. For others, it can be a difficult season to navigate for a variety of reasons. Family drama, loneliness and anxiety, overwhelming pressure to show our families that we're succeeding, or a desperate grind to the end of the year as we spend every waking moment trying to finish this year's tasks.

Given these challenges, it's easy to forget that the reason for this season is to celebrate the gift of Jesus' presence in our lives. Instead of squeezing Jesus into the remaining moments of the year, James reminds us that the gift of Jesus' presence has the power to heal old wounds, restore what's broken, give rest to our busy and tired souls, and provide peace and joy that can only be found in him.

Read Luke 2:10-12, Isaiah 9:6-7

What are your big takeaways from these passages?

Do you simply “know about Jesus,” or do you truly believe he is who he says he is and receive those things? Is he good news, great joy, your Savior and Messiah, a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace? Do you believe that his greatness has no end? Explain.

Take a moment to reflect on where you’re at this Christmas season physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Have you been able to find moments of peace and joy in the midst of these difficulties? Explain.

M O V E

As James points out, it’s easy to lose sight of the reason for this season, and all we have to do is give ourselves a moment to step back and look at the things that influence our lives. Our lives are “crowded with chaos,” leaving us feeling like we live lives that are unaffected. Our decisions are fueled by fear to the extent that we live lives untouched. And we’re ruled by routine, leaving no room for our lives to be changed for the better.

These things start to shape our identity, and anytime our identity is found in something outside of what God created us to be, the enemy uses it to invite us to be somebody that we were never supposed to become. If we can give ourselves some space this Christmas to step back from the chaos and seek the presence of Jesus, we can rediscover the fact that, as James puts it, “It’s not what we do that creates who we are. It’s whose we are that gives power to who we are.” Are you willing to take a step back this season and reclaim your identity as a son or daughter of the Living God, Emanuel - God with us?

Read Psalm 16:11 (NIV), Romans 15:13 (ESV)

How does the chaos of your life affect your relationship with Jesus? What fears influence your daily decisions? And What routines are you stuck in?

What attributes of God do you need to rediscover and feel the most? Explain.

How do you normally experience Christmas? How would you like to experience Christmas? How big is that gap, and what needs to change?

How can we, as a small group, support one another during this Christmas season, especially for those who are having a difficult time feeling the presence of peace of Jesus for various reasons?

P R A Y

God, we thank you that you love us so much you gave your one and only Son to be present with us in our greatest joys, deepest pain, and daily struggles. God, would you help us lay down everything on our plate and anything on our mind and remind us to lean into your presence this Christmas season. Help us stop striving to find happiness in all the wrong places and instead, find rest in your presence and receive the peace and the joy that comes freely from your love. God, you are worthy of all the glory this Christmas season. Will you provide rest for our souls, be our strength and peace when we need it most, and renew our faith heading into the new year.