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Export date: Fri Oct 30 12:09:07 2026 / +0000 GMT

Christian Perspectives ? I choose to celebrate

I choose to celebrate. To celebrate means to mark a significant occasion with an enjoyable activity; to honour or to praise publicly. God chose to celebrate and even instituted feasts of celebration which lasted many days. A heavenly host of angels announced the earthly birth of Jesus. What could be more celebratory than angels singing out their praises for the coming newborn King? Jesus celebrated at weddings, the Passover, and at special occasions in homes.

I choose to celebrate Christmas ? the earthly birthday of Jesus. It is interesting that careful records were kept in the Bible noting the age of individuals at various times in their lives and at their death. Clearly, birthdays were important markers. A birthday celebration draws us to reflect on how a person has grown not only physically but as a person and how they have contributed to the world in the past year. I believe the celebration of Christmas affords Christians the opportunity to tell others about Jesus with greater freedom than at any other time of year. In my mind, this is good! Without His physical birth, we would have no commemoration of His physical death on the cross, nor celebration of His resurrection.

Reflecting on the birthday of Jesus, we see how He came to change souls by the power of His Word and life. If we do not tell this good news, who will?

I choose to celebrate Christmas on Dec. 25 even though there is no record of the date of Jesus' birth. Yes, while Dec. 25 falls on the same day as an ancient pagan celebration, there is at least one pagan celebration on each of the 365 days of the year. Whichever day is chosen, our attention is to be focussed on Jesus and what He has done for us. Romans 14:5 says, ?One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.? Regardless of the chosen day, we have the opportunity, at a time when the hearts of people are sensitive and receptive to love, to blanket the world for a while with the power of God´s Word and with the power of His love reflected in us.

I choose to celebrate Christmas even if others have made it into anything but a time for Jesus. God knows my heart and He knows my focus is on Jesus and my desire is to celebrate in a manner that would honour and publically praise Him. Many have corrupted the celebration, but I choose to be an example to others in celebrating Jesus ? the reason for the season.

I choose to celebrate by using various means of symbolism. One symbol is decorated trees. Jeremiah 10: 3-5 speaks about people adorning trees with silver and gold, fastening it to other boards with nails so it will not topple, and standing it up like a scarecrow as an idol.

An idol is something you worship in place of God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, much like the golden calf the Israelites worshipped instead of God. Clearly, such an act is against God's teachings. None of the numerous decorated trees in our home are idols to be worshipped in any way. They stand as symbols only with each decorated with a theme reminding us of some aspect of who God is.

The red and white theme represents God's purity and the saving blood of Christ. The blue and silver theme represents the expanse of the sky and the stars above it ? symbolizing God's creation. The heritage decorations on one tree bring to mind memories of loved ones and of lives lived. Our angels and bells tree with gold coloured ornaments reminds me of the celebration of the angels in heaven every time a soul chooses to put Christ first in their life. The wreaths, lights and greenery celebrate life.

Jesus celebrated life. What symbols help your focus?

I choose to celebrate by giving modest gifts to loved ones and friends, not to impress or to buy their affection, but to show my appreciation in some small way for their impact on my life. Jesus and others are reported as having received and given gifts throughout the Scriptures. Christmas, for me, involves celebrating appreciation for the blessings God and others have given to each of us.

I choose to celebrate by publically honouring, praising and thanking Jesus ? not only at Christmas, but throughout the year.

What is to be gained at this special time of the year by hiding our excitement about what Jesus has done for us? What, or more importantly, who are you choosing to celebrate?

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