

Something for the Heart: *Let Jesus Grow Up . . .*

In the beginning was the Word. . . All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. . . The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. . . And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. Excerpts from John 1



So here we are, a few days after Christmas. The presents have been opened. The feasts have been shared. There's still a few Christmas cookies left, but we're getting close to finishing them off. Family may have gone home. The manger is empty and the shepherds have returned to their fields. The angels have stopped singing. And it's all a bit of a let down. We've spent the last four weeks of Advent waiting and preparing. Ok, let's be honest some of you have were preparing a lot longer than just the past four weeks. And so then the big day comes and goes – and we ask is that it? Is that all there is?

But the truth is – Christmas was never supposed to be the center attraction. Because as we all know, the birth of a child isn't the end – it's a beginning. It was about 25 years ago that my oldest son was born. On that day, everything changed. My schedule. My priorities. The way I viewed my life. When the day of his birth was over, it wasn't a let-down – it was the beginning of a new adventure, a life-time of getting to know this little baby, loving him, watching him grow up and become the young man he is now.

A birth is not supposed to be the final celebration – it's just the kick-off event.

But every year, we put so much focus on Christmas, on Jesus' birth – and then when the party's over, we go back to the ways things were. For many people, Jesus remains forever a baby in a manger. They never take the time to get to know him, to love him, to watch him grow up. Perhaps it's because we put all our focus on the telling of the story of Jesus' birth, the who and the where and the what – rather than on the reason why he was born in the first place.

Jesus came to be light to a world that lives in darkness. But we are often afraid of the light. A light from heaven can seem like a glaring spotlight, convicting us of all that we've done wrong. But what if the light came through a baby – yes, a helpless baby. Because who can resist a baby. And if we can learn to love the baby, we can learn to love God who otherwise is too big, too incomprehensible, too frightening for us to understand. Yes – a baby we can understand and love and accept.

But we can't keep Jesus as a baby. We have to let him grow up. We have to get to know him as an adult who very clearly shows us what God is like. Jesus showed us the compassion of God as he healed

people. He showed us the mercy of God as he forgave those who seemed unforgiveable. He showed us the will of God as he cared for the poor and oppressed. And he showed us the love of God when he died on our behalf.

The baby doesn't show us that. The baby is just the beginning. Now the real adventure begins as we approach the season of Epiphany – known as the season of light, where we shine the light on Jesus' life and get to know him, and so also the Father who sent him.

So don't leave Jesus in the manger. Let him grow up. Get to know him this year. And let the light of His love shine into your own darkness. Because that's why this baby was born.

“
**Quick
Quips**
”

If we could condense all the truths of Christmas into only three words, these would be the words: "God with us." We tend to focus our attention at Christmas on the infancy of Christ. The greater truth of the holiday is His deity. More astonishing than a baby in the manger is the truth that this promised baby is the omnipotent Creator of the heavens and the earth! ~ John F. MacArthur, Jr.

Lord Jesus, master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas. We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day. We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us. We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

~ Henri Nouwen