

EMBERS FROM MY FIRE

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Written by Pastor Ken Damon
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THE VISIBLE JOY OF JESUS

Ken Taylor is a Christian scholar who wrote the bestselling paraphrase of the Bible called the Living Bible. He tells a story about a friend of his who served as a missionary in a very restrictive country. For many years the government of this country had taught the people that there is no God.

Taylor says, "My friend had the opportunity to interact on a regular basis with a nonbeliever of that country who is a highly educated professional. After developing a friendship with the professional, my friend had the opportunity to share the gospel story with him. "The man said, "What you have told me cannot be true. If it were true, it is such good news that someone would have told this to me before."

The Christmas season presents an excellent opportunity for Christians to be warmly open with others about the great joy concerning the birth of Jesus Christ. Especially since most Americans celebrate Christmas in one form or another there is a natural opening to share. Our responsibility is not to make them respond but just to share the great joy God has given to us. To be able to move beyond the routine of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season we must first of all be intentional about discovering the true joy of Christmas for ourselves. We need to fully immerse ourselves in this great truth: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that who ever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

The Good News of Christmas is that God gave you and everyone else the gift of Jesus Christ!

God gave to you the greatest and most costly gift He could give. He gave you His one and only Son. This gift is the one we all need most. We need a Savior! Jesus saves us from the penalty of our sins, and offers us rescue from our harmful self-centeredness. Jesus is God in human flesh. He did not by-pass the difficulties and suffering of life. He had to go through the ordeal of birth, of being turned out to be born among the animals, and the frightening ordeal of his family having to flee for their lives to save their baby from the murderous King Herod.

Jesus grew up to be gossiped about, misunderstood, and rejected by family, friends, and nation. The people He came to save betrayed and rejected Him so that He was tortured and put to death in a brutal manner. All of this He did to be your eternal Savior. This is why the angels called the salvation story, "Good News of great joy that will be for all people." (Luke 2:10)

This is such great and wonderful news that it must not be kept to ourselves. That is like having the cure for cancer and telling no one of the secret medical miracle since they might laugh at you or not believe you. It is worth the risk to tell others.

I want to encourage you to take every day during the season of Advent to read the Good News of great joy which is for you and for all people. As you are daily immersed in the advent (coming) of Jesus you will have the great joy springing up from your own heart. It will be difficult to hide it from others.

You could read just a paragraph a day (more if you like) from the first two chapters of Luke and Matthew 1:18 – 2:23. Ask God for insight into how this is Good News for you and the world. Thank the Lord for the truth He shows you in the passage. Ask God to give you the joy of salvation so that it pours out of you to others.

Joy and boldness are two important signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit filling a person. If you do not have these

two characteristics then pray for them to be released by the Holy Spirit in you as you surrender control of every aspect of your life to God.

Then when people ask you during this holiday season, "How are you?" something very different can happen. Right on the tip of your tongue will be an answer of great joy. You might say, "Excited, as I think about the birth of Jesus." Put it in your own words and let it be real. It is okay to be happy in the Lord and to show it. Let God deal with the person's response to the seed of Good News.

Pastor Ken

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Shroyer Road Baptist Church

508 Shroyer Road, Dayton OH 45419

Phone: (937) 298-9531

[Web Site: SRBCLife.org](http://SRBCLife.org)

10:30 AM SUNDAY SERVICE --- 9:30 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

Office Hours: Monday 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM --- Tuesday - Friday 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM