





Molly & Kevin Kiefer

YOUR GUIDE TO:

**YOUR BEST
CHRISTMAS**

Ever



You can have the Christmas you really want this year. Maybe the best Christmas ever! But be warned . . . a truly great Christmas will take some planning.

Preparation will be vital if you want a Christmas that is purposeful, intentional and awake to the ways of God.

The Advent season is all about preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus, so let's begin by reminding ourselves of the message of Jesus and make sure we have that right before anyone else or anything else sways us or sets the agenda for this season.

So why did Jesus come?



Here is one of my favorite, most concise, most generous versions of the gospel message from the mouth of Jesus:

*"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."
John 10:10*

The Amplified Bible says it like this: *"I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows]."*

The reason Jesus came was so that we could experience an abundance of life—a life to the full! Or as The Message Version says it:

"I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of."



When Jesus said this, He wasn't just talking about one day in heaven when our tears are no longer a salty mess on our cheeks. He didn't mean one day when we are lifted up beyond the grind of earthly life.

He didn't even mean that day in mid-January when the marathon holiday season is finally over — you've recovered from the sugar crash, you've put the tree on the curb, you've bubble-wrapped all the decorations and tucked them away, and hopefully you've paid off the holiday credit card bills.

Jesus meant RIGHT NOW:

"I came from the Father to you, to this broken life to make a way for you to experience the fullness of life as God intended, to restore back to you the Garden, the place of full life in the presence of God."

A life to the full . . . that's the gospel message in a nutshell. It's the good news of the Christmas season—and it's the good news in every season.



So take a moment right now and imagine this is December 26th. The Christmas season is behind you. Now ask yourself a few questions: Did you have a nice Christmas? Are you happy about how it went? Do you feel satisfied? Don't settle for the answer you'll give when the barista asks, "How was your Christmas?"

Have you ever given this much thought?

What would it take for you to feel satisfied with your Christmas?

What would it take for you to feel content and peaceful and thankful for the Christmas season you just experienced?

Why don't you take a moment right to jot down whatever comes to mind. Write down the three or four (or more!) things that might make this a great Christmas for you.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



.....

.....

.....

.....





Okay, now take a look at your list. You just came up with a vision of the gospel of Jesus for the Christmas season:

Life to the full.

Since the key to a great Christmas is preparing properly, let's make sure your vision is full and not flat. Here are a few "must-haves!" for your best Christmas ever.

I'm calling these the *three dimensions* of full life.

Ready for a 3D Christmas?



1. Deep connections

The FULL and ABUNDANT life that Jesus offers comes through community and connection with each other.

Paul describes our FULL life in Jesus as an inter-connected, inter-dependent relationship—like the parts of the human body. It's unthinkable to expect our life in Christ to function if we aren't closely attached to the other parts!

"So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

Romans 12:5

In this new life, God calls us into a community with one another.



"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession"

1 Peter 2:9

And in our new identity, our new way of life, God calls us His sons and daughters.

*"And I will be a father to you,
And you shall be sons and daughters to Me."*

2 Corinthians 6:18



In a family, sons and daughters live with brothers and sisters. As members of the family of God, we come to understand and experience the gospel as God intended it. It's in close proximity to our brothers and sisters the we get both a comprehensive and precise view of God Himself.

The details that we need to grasp an accurate view of God are only visible as they are on display in our lives. It is only in community with one another that we discover His love and possibility for our own lives. The fullness of the gospel is experienced in our deep, authentic, open-hearted connection with others.

A great Christmas will require making Deep Connections!



2. Delightful Experiences

Jesus' birth announcement didn't include pounds ounces or inches—but something a bit bigger.

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.'"



Luke 2:10

The good news of Jesus' arrival causes great joy!

To experience fullness of life means we join in the joy of the good news of the gospel. We are surrounded by His abounding goodness and unfailing love. His glory is filling all of creation. Joy is waiting to be experienced! It's been delivered to our door step and we just have to bring it into our house! Our part is to take this joy into our soul as strength.

Do you remember the *Where's Waldo?* book series?

Every page was an elaborate, colorful scene crammed with people—tons and tons of people. All you had to do was find the little thin man in the red and white striped shirt, with the glasses, and the hat. And he was there, somewhere, on every page.



It's the same with joy. Finding fullness of life this Christmas season is like looking for Waldo. Everything may look colorful and cluttered, but the love of God, the joy of God, the humor of God is there somewhere. It's there on every page of your life in this season.

Maybe it's:

- The holiday drink from Starbucks.
- The warmth of the sunshine through your window as you work.
- A Hallmark movie.
- The beauty of a song.
- The squeal of someone special as they open a gift.

Be with God in the joy, because in His presence is fullness of joy!

A great Christmas will require finding Delightful Experiences!



3. Dynamic Impact

A full life is a dynamically impactful life. There was a mode of operation inherent in the creation of this earth: “Be fruitful and multiply.”

This is a mandate that still longs to be fulfilled in our lives today. The Kingdom of God always moves toward expansion just like the mustard seed. Jesus is given to us to be given through us.

You are the answer to Jesus’ prayer: *“Let your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*

Matthew 6:10

Your life is fulfilling that very prayer today.

Where do you see the Kingdom of God, as it is in heaven, being released through your life into this holiday season? God is bringing the healing, redemption, deliverance, restoration of His Kingdom to those around us all the time. At the heart of a 3D Christmas is expressing the bigger purpose in this season. After all, it’s why Jesus came.

A great Christmas will mean having Dynamic Impact!



ALL YOU WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

The Advent season is about giving us an opportunity to say “yes” to these things that draw us closer to the Kingdom.



But if we want a great Christmas this year—if we want life to the full—there’s no way we will be able say “yes” to everything. When we say “yes” to some things, that also means we will need to say “no” to some other things.

(So since the holidays are a time for giving gifts, let me put a bonus “D”—just in time for Christmas!)

4. Determining Priorities

If you want a great Christmas, you’re going to hav to make some decisions. And that means you mus identify your priorities. You may not have time for everything, but you do have time for the most important things.

Enjoying a 3D Christmas is impossible without admitting to yourself that you will not have enough time between now and Christmas to do everything, buy everything, make everything, bake everything, and enjoy every option available to you during the holiday season.





The Christmas season is a lot like a buffet, but you've only got so much room on your plate. So that means your house may not be perfect. A few decorations may not make it to the tree. A few annual activities may be left behind. A few holiday projects may be left undone. You may have to let go of a few cherished traditions—at least for this year.

But a 3D Christmas means you will have enough time to pray for the things that matter most to you. You will hear God express His love for you. You will write that encouraging Christmas card with God's heart beating in your chest. You will have strength and hope to offer someone else in a conversation around the table.

On December 26 you will be able to look back with the relief that comes from knowing that you got the A+ on the test. You will feel joy in what came through your life. You will know you spent your money with purpose and plan and that you are running free into January without debt.

Why don't you take another moment to review your list of what a great Christmas looks like for you—that's right, I'm asking you to check your list twice—and see how many of the things on your list involve making deep connections with others.

*How many are delightful experiences you hope to enjoy?
Do any involve impacting the lives of others in Kingdom ways?*



Perhaps you will want to add a few items to your list to make this Christmas a 3D Christmas—and as you consider (or reconsider) your priorities, perhaps you will decide to scratch off a few items. Then after you’ve finished, put this list up somewhere you will see it!

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”
John 10:10

You can have the Christmas you really want! The secret is to plan a 3D Christmas for yourself.

Because when you say “yes” to the three “D’s” —

Deep Connections
Delightful Experiences
Dynamic Impact

— you will experience the fullness of life that Jesus came to bring us. And that will make it a great Christmas.

The Christmas you really want!

About the Authors

Molly Kiefer and her husband Kevin pastor Thrive Vineyard Church in Palatine, IL. They’re planning to make this their best Christmas ever!

Want to hear more from Molly and Kevin?
Follow Thrive Vineyard’s Sunday morning teachings here:
<https://thrivevineyard.com/teaching/>

Thrive Vineyard Church Copyright (c) 2024