

It's Christmas day and the excitement is tangible, I can feel it in the room, and on the screen!

JOYFUL SERIES

FALLING FOR CHRISTMAS - PART 2 – Santa lol

I encourage you to check out my message from Sunday

Even though there is no sign of snow, somehow it still feels very much like Christmas

In Cape Town, there's not a sign of snow, If anything, we're windswept from the crazy South Easter that's blowing, at the same time we're close to heat stroke, But it feels like Christmas.

We eat, we open gifts, kids play with their toys in the street, and dads look on at their kids playing with their new toys having long forgotten about their gift of socks and underwear.

The thing is that in a couple of hours time, Christmas will be over. All the gifts will be unwrapped, some thoroughly played with and worn out, and we would have filled that black bag with Christmas wrapping paper

Many of us would have already planned our trip to the shop to exchange our clothing gift for a different size, too bad for the dads that shops don't allow underwear returns!

After a few days, trees and lights will come down and get tossed out or boxed up and put back in the garage. And so it happens every year — **a sense of let-down**.

Call me a killjoy, but I find this sensation rather predictable. We're constantly searching for the feel goods, and often we live between these moments waiting for the next.

Whatever the cause, Christmas never seems to live up to the build-up.

⇒ **HERE'S THE TRUTH: When it's not about Jesus**, and celebrating him we will never have true joy. I'd like to read a promise from:

Zephaniah 3:15

*The LORD has taken away your punishment,
he has turned back your enemy.*

*The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you;
never again will you fear any harm.*

⇒ **Every line is a promise**

© **STORY of cheating in grade 3**. I was guilty, but I blamed the guy next to me and the guy who busted me. We live in a generation that can't take responsibility.

Blaming puts us on a pedestal, it makes us feel better about ourselves.

⇒ **I'd like to suggest** that we tend to blame others when we're unsure of our identity.

My punishment was that I got zero for that test! I think we forget that the Bible says the wages of sin is death. The payment, the reward for sin is punishment. Not because God's a sadist, but because he can't be in the presence of sin.

As Christ-followers, our inheritance is to live in complete freedom and peace, knowing our identity as sons and daughters of our father, and the power of Christ that we carry to share the

gospel, heal the sick, and free the oppressed. Nothing less. We can only live in this reality when we're actively pursuing a relationship with God. So how are you doing today?

⇒ Here's a hard pill to swallow: Christians are often perceived as judgemental, sheltered or hypocritical. It's only when we engage in a daily walk with our father, our hearts soften, and we become changed people.

1) WE'RE CAUGHT IN THE SPACE BETWEEN

☉ **There's this movie called 'The Space Between'** where a guy by the name of Gardner is born on Mars and wants to go to Earth for a girl, but he struggles to adapt to it, to the point where the earth's environment threatens his life.

As much as I marvel at space travel and Space X's vision to go to Mars, I'm still enjoying earth. But sometimes all we can think about is our life on earth! But perhaps it's the other way around. Think of Gardner who's stuck on Mars, in fact it's all he's ever known. His whole world is filled with so many limitations and restrictions, that he can't actually begin to imagine what earth must be like.

Perhaps we've adapted so well to earth that we struggle to comprehend the beauty of heaven.

We're stuck in space between. - We're in the *already but not yet*

Your life right now is not that main act, it's just the starter. It's just the appetiser, this is not the end game, but we live as if it's everything.

1 John 3:2-3 MSG

²⁻³ But friends, that's exactly who we are: children of God. And that's only the beginning. Who knows how we'll end up! What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we'll see him—and in seeing him, become like him. All of us who look forward to his Coming stay ready, with the glistening purity of Jesus' life as a model for our own.

CUMON! This scripture is covered in expectation and excitement!

We will be like him: in body, in immortality, in sinlessness (We will never think a bad thought), in power and spirituality, in freedom from all imperfection and affliction.

As for now, we're in the **space between**

- If you've been pregnant, you've been in the space between
- If you've studied, you've been in the space between
- If you've travelled, you've been in the space between

Life in many ways is the **space between**. The space where nothing satisfies forever

- You just can't wait to get to high school.
- Then you can't wait to get out of high school.
- Then you can't wait to get to college.
- Then you can't wait to get a good job.
- You can't wait to get married...It never ends..

Bono nailed it, didn't he? *"But I still haven't found what I'm looking for."*

We're in the space between and we can be at complete peace because as Christ followers, this world is not the end.

2) CHRISTMAS WILL NEVER MEET OUR EARTHLY EXPECTATIONS

© In fact, it doesn't take long to become aware of our selfish hearts

We can see it in our kids, As they're opening their gift, if it's not what they were hoping for.... Then it's like, "Well, I really wanted the new Xbox, and not the Xbox 360." And you're thinking, 'Oh my word, let me know return this to the store right now.' "I'll take all your presents back! I'll start a fire, if you know what I'm saying."

This is where Jesus comes in. He confronts our selfishness like a knife through hot butter.

JESUS IS THE VERY DEFINITION OF LOVE

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Jesus came to earth to reveal to us the inexhaustible fire-hydrant of God's grace. It's as if he strikes open this fire hydrant that bursts forth.

© Story about my leaking tap – TINY leak, but you know it's there. I couldn't find the water mains tap! This leak is the complete opposite of God.

- It's the uncapped 100mb fiber line of God's grace
- It's the eat as much as you like buffet (Spargos steak special
- It's the outrageous grace and gift of Jesus, that should always keep us wondering.
- The world sees a baby in a manger, I see an outrageous lion who took back the keys of death and destroyed them forever! **Have you encountered his grace?**

© I will never forget the first time that I tasted a New York Bagel...

- © **You know how you experience something the first time?** It's just incredible. But the more you experience something, the more it kind of loses its lustre. Jesus is the gift that never gets old or familiar. Because he's life to our veins!

Ephesians 3:16-19

¹⁶ And I pray that he would unveil within you the unlimited riches of his glory and favor until supernatural strength floods your innermost being with his divine might and explosive power.

¹⁷ Then, by constantly using your faith, the life of Christ will be released deep inside you, and the resting place of his love will become the very source and root of your life.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Then you will be empowered to discover what every holy one experiences—the great magnitude of the astonishing love of Christ in all its dimensions. How deeply intimate and far-reaching is his love! How enduring and inclusive it is! Endless love beyond measurement that transcends our understanding—this extravagant love pours into you until you are filled to overflowing with the fullness of God!

You know what Christmas should be about: Every year, our delight and gratitude for God should grow as we remember Jesus Christ and his amazing sacrifice. In fact every year I'm more puzzled at his grace, I'm ok to rest in the mystery of the cross.

But here's what I do know

Jesus is the kindest, most beautiful, compassionate and loving gentleman that you will ever meet. He came to remove our suffering, our pain and our imminent death, by taking our place. Our punishment has been removed. That's true right now.

Jesus Christ came as a gift, as a defenceless baby, he came to give us freedom and to give us power. Today, we celebrate the gift of a lifetime, but it will be missed, if we don't rise up and walk in the power and authority that he has given us.

The power to share the good news, to heal the sick, the set the oppressed free. **When last did we pray for the sick? or walk someone through a freedom prayer. Sometimes we're so full of head knowledge, but we don't walk in obedience to God. When we know our authority we'll walk in it!**

Tim Keller says it like this:

When we see baby Jesus lying in a manger, and when we see Jesus dying on a cross. We see a God who is not remote but involved. We sometimes wonder why God doesn't just end suffering, but we know that whatever the reason, it isn't one of indifference or remoteness. God so hates suffering and evil that he was willing to come into it and become enmeshed in it.

The gift of Christmas gives you a resource—a comfort and consolation—for dealing with suffering, because in it we see God's willingness to enter this world of suffering to suffer with us and for us. No other religion does this. You are blessed if you open this gift and take it into your life. If you do, you'll be blessed. You'll be transformed.

CLOSE STORY

There's a story of a prince who had fallen in love with a peasant girl. This prince knew that if he presented himself to her with all of his royal trappings, she would be overawed by him. His power and majesty would render her incapable of freely choosing to love him. Knowing this, the prince took off his royal garments, set aside his crown, and dressed himself as a peasant. He became a peasant in her eyes, so that in this guise she could choose to love him or not, for his own sake.

So it was with God at that first Christmas. If He had not been willing to put His power "on hold," loving Him would be impossible. We would not have the freedom needed to choose love if our God powerfully controlled everything. If all that we thought and did was under the control of His power, then love, freely given, would not be possible.

- ⇒ God went to the greatest measure to help us to identify with him. He couldn't have shouted it louder. Today, we celebrate Jesus, we celebrate life. May everything else come second. May you know how much Jesus loves you, that he chose love above anything else. **God is seeking us out,** he is seeking you out. He's after your heart
- ⇒ **Choose love and grace this Christmas, genuinely choose Jesus and you'll never look back**