

# Editorial: Instead of ‘Merry Christmas’ in July, how about celebrating Jesus’ birthday his way?

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While you were thinking about Independence Day, the president of the United States was thinking about Christmas.



Marv Knox

Donald Trump celebrated Christmas in July during the Celebrate Freedom rally in Washington’s Kennedy Center three days before the Fourth. The gala was intended to honor the military, but the president reprised some of hits from the campaign trail.

“Our religious liberty is enshrined in the very first amendment in the Bill of Rights,” [he said](#). “The American founders invoked our Creator four times in the Declaration of Independence. Benjamin Franklin reminded his colleague at the Constitutional Convention to begin by bowing their heads in prayer. I remind you that we’re going to start saying ‘Merry Christmas’ again.”

**Dopy in December; juvenile in July**

If you think cranking up the Christmas wars in July seems a little odd, that's because it is. Fighting over whether people say "Merry Christmas" is dopey in December, and it's just plain juvenile in July.

Let's think about this from Jesus' standpoint. We don't know what he really thinks about people celebrating his birthday. Most mature people get over making a big deal of their birthdays somewhere in early adulthood, and the Lord has had a couple thousand of them. Also, even the folks who like to keep on celebrating their birthdays only really expect their family to make a big deal. So, why would Jesus be any different?

But more to the point: Assuming Jesus cares about how people celebrate his birthday, don't you think he wants them to do so it advances his kingdom?

### **What Jesus said ...**

The First and Second Commandments tell us: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." The Great Commission instructs us: "Go, and make disciples of all nations ... ."

If Christians intend to come anywhere near demonstrating we love our neighbors and seeing any success in making disciples, then our mandated approach should be to love them and lead them into a saving relationship with Jesus. Since all they know of Jesus is what they see of him in us, how can we expect them to think of Jesus as loving if they don't know we're loving?

Unfortunately, Christians who get all high and mighty about whether others say "Merry Christmas" come off as hateful jerks rather than loving soul winners. Ramping up on "Merry Christmas" may be a productive political ploy, but it's atrocious evangelism.

We might not expect President Trump to understand that. After all, one of his leading evangelical boosters called him a “[baby Christian](#),” and he hasn’t demonstrated significant biblical knowledge. But we should know better; we should celebrate Christmas so that we attract others to our Savior.

## **Christmas is coming**

Since the president brought it up now, we’ve got about five months to get ready before the Christmas season hits full stride. Instead of waging the Christmas wars this year, let’s engage a strategy of spreading divine love, which compelled Jesus to come to Earth in the first place.

Let’s truly love our neighbors as ourselves. If we take the Parable of the Good Samaritan seriously, we know our neighbors include Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, people of lesser-known faiths and no faith. If we take Jesus’ teachings seriously, we know that means feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, taking in the stranger, clothing the naked, healing the sick and visiting the prisoner.

Treating all people as our neighbor and showing divine love and care for “the least” among us are the kinds of gifts Jesus would love for his birthday. Christmas will be here before you know it, so get ready.

Better yet, the president has declared Christmas in July. So, start now.

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