

# Commentary: Have Evangelicals forgotten the real meaning of Christmas?

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Christmas is the story of God's perfect love coming to earth in Christ Jesus. Christmas is not something the church is simply called to proclaim in the season of Advent. We should proclaim and live the Christmas story all year long. Proclaiming the Christmas story is about so much more than culture wars — about getting upset (for instance) if a store clerk says "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas."

Christmas is about God showing up on the human scene.

What happens when God shows up? People find healing. Outcasts are welcome at the table. In fact, they are given a place of honor at the table. When God shows up, sinners ostracized by the religious community find forgiveness and radical grace. Religious hypocrisy is called out on the carpet. The profound mystery of perfect love takes on human form. Religious zealots are told to cast the first stone — if they're without sin. When God shows up, things are different, because "Light has entered the darkness."

What would it look like for God to truly show up this Christmas? One of the biblical names given to Jesus is *Immanuel*, meaning "God with us." Immanuel sounds great, until you realize that "God with us" can be a bit uncomfortable, and even a little frightening. "God with us" can lead us to the kinds of radical love that Christ showed. "God with us" is divine holiness invading our personal space, and shining a light on the darkness within our own hearts.

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