

chief purpose in being born was to do exactly that. He chose to come and live, and even chose to come and die, to offer us that life, that future and that peace.

This is what's on offer in the first Christmas story: the peace of knowing our Maker as our perfect Father. If you know God as your Father, you know that the one who made everything is watching out for you. You know that he is *for* you because he loves you, unconditionally. You know that he will keep you safe: not from every bad thing that might happen but from the worst thing that can happen—a life beyond death without him and therefore without anything good.

This is the peace that we all want, deep down. It's a peace that seems so elusive in this world and in our own hearts. When you know that Jesus has taken your sin so that you can enjoy God's unconditional love, then you can navigate pain and poverty and even death, and you can walk with a sense of peace through whatever tensions and disappointments this Christmas season or the year ahead throws at you. Why? Because you're at peace with the God who is there, the God who made you, and the God who wants to spend eternity with you.

And that's why, when some angels appeared to some shepherds on the night Jesus was born—the night of the first Christmas—this

was what they said was now available: “On earth peace to those on whom [God's] favour rests” (Luke 2 v 14).

This Christmas, you really could be **full of peace.**

Of course, you might have questions or objections. That's fair enough. I'd just encourage you to look into the first Christmas story and the person at the heart of it. You could read the Gospel of Luke, one of the biographies of Jesus you find in the Bible. Or you could grab a copy of the short book that this little booklet is based on, available from thegoodbook.com. Just scan the QR code below and enter the code PeaceToday at the checkout to get 50% off. But whatever you do next, I hope you have a great Christmas and a happy—and peace-filled—new year.



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I know Christmas is usually associated with fun, happy stuff like presents, parties and dubious pop songs. But, if you're like me, you find that Christmas also dials up the stress levels.

There are all the Christmas preparations and diplomatic family negotiations. For a lot of us, there are the financial worries. And there's also the fact that the Christmas season comes around as an annual reminder that, yes, *twelve months have gone by*. A year has passed and I still didn't clean out the shed, still didn't have the neighbours over for a meal, still didn't exercise as I promised myself I would.

December: the least peaceful month on the calendar.

And yet... imagine if, this Christmas, you could be full of peace. Imagine being able to lie in bed and not have worries crowding in as you close your eyes. Imagine being able to say you're doing well *and really mean it*. Imagine being able to look at the to-do list and the calendar and the coming year and feel... peace.

What would it take to experience that kind of peace? Well, I want to tell you what I have discovered in my life: that while there are so many reasons why the Christmas season is more stressful than peaceful, it is the original Christmas story that offers you peace. Here's why.

First, the Christmas story tells us that *there is a God*. And that's a good thing because if there is no God then there are ultimately no rules. It's just survival of the strongest. This is why we fight: because no one gets to say, "Here's what's right". But if there's a God, then there is a reference point—an umpire—outside of ourselves. When Jesus, God's Son, was born in miraculous circumstances 2,000 years ago, God was showing himself to the world he'd made. He was announcing that he is real and that, in Jesus, he's come to be our umpire—to make the calls... to right the wrongs... to be, in the poetic words of one ancient Bible writer, "Mighty God ... Prince of peace" (Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6).



Second, the Christmas story tells us that in looking for peace, we have a deeper problem than we might think.

It wasn't an accident that this baby who was God on earth was called Jesus. Jesus means "God saves", and he was called that "because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1 v 21). The two key words there are "save" and "sins". The second word is a bit like a divine fire alarm. It tells us that our biggest problem is not outside of us (Christmas prep, family issues, financial strains and so on) but inside of us. Put simply, our

problem is our sin: our decision to break the rules that God has programmed into this universe. Behind that decision is a refusal to live as though he is real and has the right to make the calls. Sin spoils things in this life, and (most seriously) it cuts us off from the God who gives life. When the Bible talks about sin, it's like it's sounding a fire alarm. Jesus' name warns us of danger. We need rescuing. We need saving.



Third, though, the Christmas story tells us that God chose to rescue us. He came to "*save* his people from their sins".

God did not come into this world as a man just to tell us how to live.

He didn't come to tell us to do better.

He didn't come to give us our eviction notice because we've chosen not to let him be in charge while we live in the world that he's made.

No—he came to *save* us. Our chief problem is sin and the separation from God that it brings. So our chief need is to be rescued from our sins and restored to relationship with God so that we can enjoy a deep, transforming peace with God that lasts for ever. And so Jesus'