

# Outline

## Imagine Christmas

### Imagine Me Without U

#### Slide# Content

##### **December: You know what that means?**

Craziness

Gift shopping for everyone

Get-togethers with everyone

Relatives (even the ones we hope not to offend)

##### **Christmas can be tough for all of us.**

When four of Santa's elves got sick, and the trainee elves did not produce the toys as fast as the regular ones, Santa was beginning to feel the pressure of being behind schedule.

Then Mrs. Claus told Santa that her Mom was coming to visit. This stressed Santa even more.

When he went to harness the reindeer, he found that three of them were about to give birth and two had jumped the fence and were out, heaven knows where. More stress.

Then when he began to load the sleigh one of the boards cracked, and the toy bag fell to the ground and scattered the toys.

So, frustrated, Santa went into the house for a cup of apple cider and a shot of rum. When he went to the cupboard, he discovered that the elves had hidden the liquor, and there was nothing to drink. In his frustration, he accidentally dropped the cider pot, and it broke into hundreds of little pieces all over the kitchen floor. He went to get the broom and found that mice had eaten the straw end of the broom.

Just then the doorbell rang, and irritable Santa trudged to the door. He opened the door, and there was a little angel with a great big Christmas tree. The angel said, very cheerfully, "Merry Christmas, Santa. Isn't it a lovely day? I have a beautiful tree for you. Where would you like me to stick it?"

And so began the tradition of the little angel on top of the Christmas tree.

##### **What would happen if you focused on the Imagination of Christmas?**

Make believe stories of Kris Kringle blessing the world

Grinches who start out slow, but end up blessing the world

Charlie Browns and Snoopys who forget the meaning of Christmas, but are reminded by Linuses and end up blessing the world

**December 2, 2007**

**Imagine December without the make-believe reminders to bless the world. Imagine Me Without U.**

U who pass me on the street in big need of a word of encouragement

U in the homeless shelter without an encourager

U my neighbor whom I have just never taken the time or care to get to know and share my life with

U who needs someone to accept U in this unplanned pregnancy, hope in a job-less situation, love in my recent divorce, grace in our angry feud

**Imagine me with U whom God gave me the opportunity to grow in love and grace and mercy and hope by giving me U in a chance encounter of mercy.**

**I think God wants us to imagine the make-believe truths of the Christmas season and act on them with kindness.**

If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: Philippians 2:1 TM

Have a heart!

Live out the Love of Jesus practically and truthfully

If you truly are a community

Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Philippians 2:2 TM

Imagine unity of purpose – Love one another and me!

Imagine living out love – Do love in very practical visible ways!

Imagine Friendliness – Be loving and genuine in your general attitude!

Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. Philippians 2:3,4 TM

Imagine living respect!

Imagine living humility and grace!

Imagine living selflessly!

Imagine living kindness!

**December 2, 2007**

### **Imagine Living Like Jesus, God's Son in the Christmas Truth!**

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life. Philippians 2:5-8 TM

### **Imagine the Results!**

Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything...Philippians 2:9 TM

### **Don't believe the Bible – How about an expert?**

Marshall Rosenberg, the founder of the Center for Nonviolent Communication: on his views about giving from the heart:

"When we give from the heart, we do so out of a joy that springs forth whenever we willingly enrich another person's life. This kind of giving benefits both the giver and receiver. The receiver enjoys the gift without worrying about the consequences that accompany gifts given out of fear, guilt, shame, or desire for gain. The giver benefits from the enhanced self-esteem that results when we see our efforts contributing to someone's well being."

### **How Can U live out the Imagination of God? A.R.K.**

Commit to live out December by performing one Act of Random Kindness each day of the month.

Encourage a frowner with a positive word.

Carry someone's groceries to the car.

Let someone ahead of you on the HOV re-ramp.

Let the ex have her way.

Give the boss that extra hour.

Don't get the last word.

Meet your neighbor – finally.

Take that families' Christmas tree to the dump for them.

**Meet the Richters and their new A.R.K. LIFE Group!**

**December 2, 2007**

### **How about an experiment this December?**

Take this Ni River A.R.K. calendar and put it on your fridge.

Commit to looking for and achieving one purposeful act of random kindness every day of December.

Mark off each day of the calendar that you commit an A.R.K.

Come back to church on December 30 and tell us if your December was better or worse because of it!

The randomness of the act encourages you to give when the mood strikes you. Don't wait, because the longer you wait, the less likely you are to do it. This reminds me of an anecdote about Gandhi's Shoe: While boarding a moving train one day, one of Mohandas Gandhi's shoes slipped off and fell upon the track. As he was unable to retrieve it, Gandhi - to the astonishment of his fellow travelers - calmly removed his other shoe and threw it down the track to where the first had landed. "The poor man who finds the shoe lying on the track," Gandhi explained, "will now have a pair he can use."

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