

# What to Do With This Stuff: Lessons from Lil Jon's Crunk Christmas

I'm telling you right now, whenever I get bored during the Christmas season, I'm clicking on "All I Really Want for Christmas!" Overplayed traditional songs are dumped down the drain as Lil Jon empties the eggnog in the sink and replaces it with Kool-Aid. His "carol" is energetic. It's hilarious. It's got kids dancing and laughing. It's got gifts galore and an overflowing buffet. Kool-Aid Man and DJ Santa throwing a party with Lil Jon in someone else's house!

Most of all, it's got honesty.

There's no pretense of spirituality. There's no allusion to the birth of Jesus. Not a hint of contentment, gratitude, or humility. There's nothing suggestive of it being more blessed to give than to receive. Instead, there's the contagious chorus:



*All I really want, really want for Christmas  
All I really want, really want for Christmas  
All I really want, really want for Christmas  
Is everything on my list, baby, yeah!*

## **Bearing Gifts, We've Traveled So Far**

Lil Jon freely admits that he's been planting seeds all year about what people should buy him. Something about that is religiously refreshing, even if detrimental. To be shamelessly selfish isn't a virtue. However, to cloak our selfishness in spiritual garb is a much more dangerous vice. Just ask King Hezekiah (you can read about him in 2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32; Isaiah 36-39).

Hezekiah wasn't one of the many bad kings of Judah. He was one of the few good ones! He cut down idols, refurbished God's temple, brought reformation to the priesthood, restored people's faith in the "church" of his day, and his prayer for Judah's protection was answered with the swift, supernatural defeat of an enemy army. Hezekiah was doing so well, until...

Hezekiah became deathly ill. After humbly praying for healing, the prophet Isaiah promised that God would restore the king's health and lengthen his life by 15 years. The king asked for a heavenly sign to confirm the prediction would come true. The sign God sent was to move back time—to turn

back the sun (2 Kings 20:8-11).

## Neighbors Who Notice

A prince in the neighboring kingdom of Babylon heard about Hezekiah's sickness and healing (2 Kings 20:12). Since Babylonians were known for studying the stars (Dan. 2:2), the timing of the healing and the seemingly backward movement of the sun got Berodach-baladan's attention. He sent messengers with gifts and a letter in order to find out if there was a link between Hezekiah's new lease on life and the disruption of heavenly bodies.



*Hundreds of years before the star of Bethlehem, wise men noticed a sign in the sun.*

It was at this moment, God did a strange thing: "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chronicles 32:31). Did God abandon the king? No, he just allowed him space without the intervention of prophets or voices from heaven to specifically guide his thoughts and actions. God wanted to know how deeply His grace in Hezekiah's life had penetrated the king's heart. How would Hezekiah respond when the Babylonians came from the East to Jerusalem after seeing a sign from the heavens?

## From Showrooms to Stocking Stuffers

Hezekiah got caught up in the moment. Pride blinded him from seeing the opportunity to share his faith. Instead, he showed off his stuff—all his stuff (Isaiah 39:2-4). He turned their minds from the supernatural to the natural. Isaiah announced that the king's mistake of showing off his riches would lead to the Babylonians returning to plunder those riches and march his people into captivity. The Babylonians were shown someone's house that seemed to have everything on their carnal Christmas list.

These visitors already had material riches, but thought Hezekiah's spiritual riches exceeded theirs. It wasn't Babylonian gods that moved the heavens to save their king, it was the God whose temple was in Jerusalem. They left spiritually unimpressed. Rather than learning more about God, they learned where they could get more gold. How might history have been different if

Hezekiah had emphasized the things of God during that show and tell tour?

## **Greatest Gift of All**

Fast forward a few hundred years. A couple with a baby played show and tell when some astrologers from the East came to Jerusalem after seeing a unique movement in the heavens. This sign was a mysterious light that was neither a fixed star, nor a planet. It seemed to urge them to play follow the leader, until they ended up in Bethlehem. The show and tell Mary and Joseph played was a humble game. There were no palaces to tour or delicacies to sample. There was only one main attraction: a baby wrapped in very plain blankets. God chose where His Son would be born and ordained that there would be nothing about the surroundings that would overshadow His glory. When they saw Jesus, the wise men showed their wisdom by offering their earthly treasures at the feet of the heavenly treasure. For as one author wrote, "In giving up His Son, He [God the Father] has poured out to us all heaven in one gift" (E.G. White, *Our Father Cares*, 65). The wisdom of the wise men was that they recognized their stuff was nothing compared to Jesus.

Jesus' parents were regular working class folks without the means to jump up and move to another country to start a new life. However, God richly rewarded them when they shared the one thing on their visitors' that couldn't be bought or sold. The material gifts from the Magi of the East enabled Jesus and his parents to seek asylum in Egypt, thus escaping Herod's murderous rampage (Matthew 2:11-18).

## **Good Gifts All from God**

The lessons from Lil Jon's Crunk Christmas remind me that it's easy, whether a rapper or a biblical king like Hezekiah, to lose focus on what's important. Stuff can crowd Christ out of Christmas. Yet, stuff can be a blessing—depending on how we use it and share it. And we will share it more readily when we remember our stuff really isn't ours. Just like the house Lil Jon, Kool-Aid Man, and DJ Santa were partying in wasn't theirs, we have to remember that every good and perfect gift we receive comes from our Father above.

---

## **Drama Files: Holiday Hues of Blue**

*Seems like the holiday season was just here, Bryon\* thought to himself. He was divorced, and was not looking forward to another holiday season alone. Though successful in his work, and traveling extensively, this young man realized all of that failed to fill the emptiness in his life. Bryon decided*

to find a therapist to help him adjust to the "Holiday Blues." He was feeling loneliness, confusion, hurt, and disappointment during this time.



## **Blue Christmas Without You**

Byron also felt pain from the memories of his past because his wife would decorate the home so beautifully. They would do the family shopping together.

Byron always looked forward to his parents and siblings joining him every year for the holidays and experiencing the love of the festivities. He grew up with his parents and many siblings engaging with the gift sharing, singing and visiting his grandparents was so enjoyable.

## **Impending Season of Joy**

As the time approached year after year Byron would remain busy and focused on his work. When November approached his depression began to overwhelm him. Prior to his divorce, Julie, his ex-wife had moved out to an apartment 22 miles away. She never called, and never came back.

Thanksgiving would usually be the start of the blues, a time when it seems everyone cherished a thankful and forgiving spirit. Byron figured that if there was ever a time when Julie would reconsider and return home, it would be at the beginning of the holiday season. He thought that she would call, but she never did.



Emotionally it took Bryon a while to get past his pain. He could not wait for the holiday season to pass. He would find himself staying away from the stores or office holiday gatherings. Often, he hid his pain as more of his coworkers and friends learned that he was divorced.

As a very kind man and private person, Byron reluctantly told his family that Julie left and filed for divorce. His parents wondered what happened to Julie was on several occasions, so he finally told them the truth. He told them that Julie left because she no longer loved him the way a wife should. She really just grabbed for straws, looking for a way to leave.

## **Some Folks Like to Get Away**

In many cases people experience the holiday blues due to the lack of finances, the loss of family members or friends, divorce, relocation, loss of employment, or just hardship. They watch while so many other people enjoy the luxury of shopping, eating out at nice restaurants, traveling, and leaving their cares behind. Holiday blues are a real stressors.

Reimagine and recast your holidays using these ideas:

1. Acknowledge your feelings about your pain.
2. Reach out to positive family and friends.
3. Be realistic about your station in life.
4. Set aside differences with those who have hurt you by forgiving them.
5. Forgive yourself and pray
6. Develop a budget and don't deviate from it.
7. Don't run into any ones arms because you are lonely.
8. Know your limitations
9. The holidays are not a license to indulge in substance abuse.
10. Schedule a pre-holiday or holiday season counseling session.

As Bryon continued his therapy we discussed how important it is to recognize things could be so much worse, so he decided to do his best to remain thankful. He also committed to remaining busy and seeking the company of positive and encouraging family and friends.

## **Find The Right Mix of People And Activities**

During the therapeutic process it is vital to identify with people who have gone through similar experiences to help you mature by attending a support group. Despite what you are going through try to be a blessing to someone else by serving and visiting someone in the hospital, a homeless shelter or

serve at soup kitchen.

Accept, believe, and embrace Roman's 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called to his purpose." By grasping this concept when you are experiencing the holiday blues, you remember that God knows your pain and offers you comfort through your situation.

With another holiday approaching Bryon is learning to remain focused on others. He is thankful, and allowing God's will to be done while defining his new purpose in life by giving back to others. He is beginning a new chapter in his life not just getting through the holiday blues, but adjusting and accepting to a new life. Bryon now ends each session with these words: "God can make my latter days better than my former days."

\*The names have been changed to protect the innocent.

---

## **New Birth Experience: Fully Rely On God This Time**

# **The Gospel According to Matthew. Thinking of the New Birth during this season. Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Monday, November 26, 2018**

[Listen to "Thoughts in Worship 11.26.2018" on Spreaker.](#)

"...Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Messiah. So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, 14 generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, 14 generations. The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:16–18, HCSB).

### **Surprise**

It was a miracle! A young woman who had never had sexual relations with any man was pregnant. How many times have you heard of instances when women did not know they were pregnant until the third trimester? How many times have you heard of a woman feeling weird, going to the doctor to find out what was going on, and then ... "surprise!" being diagnosed, not with something that caused weird feelings or nausea, but rather pregnancy? They simply did not know. Even when these women did not realize they were pregnant and were surprised by the fact, they did have sexual relations, and pregnancy was the

outcome of that experience. Makes sense.

Well, Mary's case was different. It was so different that God sent an angel to her to explain what happened. Even though she was indeed a virgin, she was pregnant. Miraculously, in fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies, this holy young woman of God was pregnant. The Holy Spirit reached down into her DNA, with all of its historic and genetic relevance and placed the blessed embryo (for lack of a better way of saying it) who we would finally recognize was the Son of God! God's power overshadowed the human predicament, and Mary bore the Son of the Living God. Miracle!

## **Weak Roots in The Family Tree**

Since we do not have a lot of time to exhaust this holy topic, I would like to direct your attention to an intriguing aspect of the story. Even though Joseph had nothing to do with Jesus' birth, He did still come through the womb of a normal human woman. This means that the list of persons preceding our theme passage were all ancestors of Christ. This also magnifies the reality, that Jesus Christ entered upon the human scene with the need to rely on His Father, fully, so He could live a righteous life. Have you read the motley cast of characters, with all their foibles in the list? This simply says to us, that the Father did not orchestrate some sideshow and call it the plan of salvation. No! Jesus had real human ancestors whose genetics could have impacted His character if He did not rely on His Father's strength 100% of the time.

Are you willing to rely on God for power to live above sin just like Jesus did? We do realize there is a difference here – Jesus was victorious from His birth until He died. We all have sinned and come short of God's glorious intent for our lives. However, John 3, Romans 6, and Romans 8, all teach us that we can be victorious from our *newbirth* until we die or Jesus returns, as the case may be. If we make mistakes along the way, following our newbirth experience, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One.

This has been the gospel according to Matthew. Be transformed by it.