

THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS

Have you ever noticed that we spend most of the Christmas season searching—searching for the perfect gift, searching for bargains, searching for just the right decoration . . . searching around and around for a place to park?

It certainly gives a different spin to the biblical concept, “Seek and you will find”!

And what is it that we really want to find?

I think most of us are looking for that perfect Norman Rockwell Christmas, where we find the world—and our cranky relatives—perfect and peaceful and pain-free. But I’ll let you in on a simple little secret that your heart suspects but your head is struggling to understand: No matter how special you want Christmas to be, something will always go wrong.

Prepare for Surprises

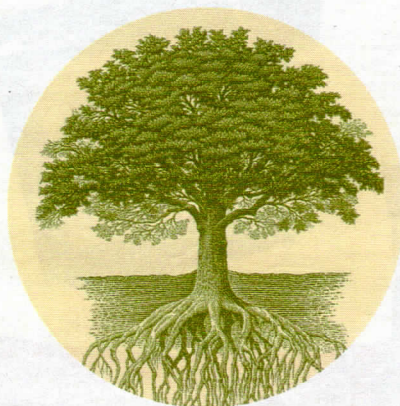
You can plan for the best, but it just doesn’t happen: The gift you ordered doesn’t arrive on time; your late-night Santa follows the directions and still can’t get the bicycle put together; Grandma’s fruitcake doesn’t taste like fruit or cake. And I know, when Christmas doesn’t meet your expectations, life gets messy.

That’s why I want you to look at Christmas differently this year. This season is not about how your plans get messed up; rather it’s about what God will do with your messy plans.

Three years ago, my wife, Kay, and I had some perfect plans for Christ-

mas. As a pastor, it’s my favorite time of year, but then there was a dreaded diagnosis: breast cancer. Talk about having your plans messed up—we were forced to fall fully on our faith, trusting that God could bring good even out of the bad situations of life.

In the cancer ward of the hospital, there was a plaque with words that underscored my faith in God. It read, “Cancer is so limited. It cannot cripple love. It cannot shatter hope. It cannot corrode faith. It cannot destroy peace. Cancer cannot kill friendships. It cannot suppress memories. It cannot silence courage. It cannot invade the soul. It cannot steal eternal life. And it cannot conquer the spirit.” To that I would add, “It cannot defeat you if you trust Jesus Christ to work all things together for good in your life.”



This Christmas you may feel discouraged. Or lonely. Or stressed out by too many plans or by plans that have fallen through. Perhaps this is your first Christmas after a bad divorce. Or a death. Or a disability. Maybe you’re concerned or feeling hopeless about your finances or your future.

Answer to Your Search

What should you do? Do what the Wise Men did that very first Christmas: Seek God. Focus on Him. God promises in the Bible, “You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.”

What have you been seeking? Has it been happiness or fulfillment or peace of mind or love or a purpose to living? During Christmastime people have a tendency to turn up the volume on whatever is going on in their lives. But you can know, even if your holiday plans are messy, that God is working His plan in your life in ways you cannot even imagine: “No one has ever seen or heard or even imagined what wonderful things that God has ready for those who love Him.”

You can learn more about living The Purpose Driven Life by going to www.purposedrivenlife.com or by e-mailing Rick Warren at askrickanything@purposedrivenlife.com.