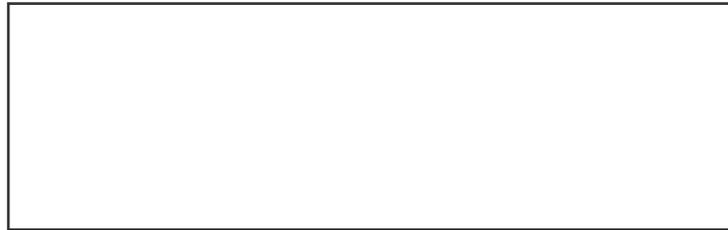


the many gifts, most of those will fade into oblivion, lost among the memories of many Christmases; but the love that you'll have shared and nurtured will live on forever.

Love means making time for others, even if you end up with fewer gifts and less than perfect Christmas events. The less you clutter your Christmas season, the more time you'll have for what's really important, what really matters, the essence of Christmas—love!

If you haven't yet experienced Jesus' beautiful love, the heart and soul of Christmas, you can now. All it takes is inviting Him into your heart and life. You can say something like this:

Jesus, I thank You for the love You have shown me by coming to Earth, by living and dying for me. I want to celebrate this Christmas together with You. I want to know You, to receive Your love, and Your gift of eternal life. Please touch my life with the love You have to offer, and help me to share that love with others too.



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The less frenzied you are about creating the "perfect" Christmas, the more time you'll find to enjoy it. The less stressed and pressured you are, the more happiness and joy will fill the time you and your loved ones spend together. Christmas is best enjoyed when it isn't centered on decorations, gifts, or festivities, but when love is at its core. Love is the essence of Christmas. Christmas should mean taking quality time with your family and friends. It's about cherishing and celebrating the love you share. Sadly, love can get lost amidst the Christmas hustle and bustle. Sometimes it's covered up by the decorations and gifts, the endless shopping, and the Christmas dinner and parties.

Christmas is a time of festivities, but there's much more to it than that. Christmas is My birthday. It's a time to celebrate the greatest gift ever given to humanity. Can you take a moment for Me now, in honor of My birthday? Can you spare a minute to let Me tell you how much I love you? Can you stop to thank Me for My love, and to reflect on how you can spread more love throughout the world?

It was love for you that brought Me to Earth 2,000 years ago. It was love that gave Me the impetus to walk your world and be one of you, to live and to die for you. Love was, and still is, the core of My existence. Everything I have done has been out of love for you personally, and love for humankind as a whole. You mean that much to Me!

This Christmas season, take time for love. If you do, you'll be giving Me a wonderful gift, and you'll make it possible for Me to give you special gifts this year as well. Celebrate love as the main feature of your holiday celebrations. The festive decorations, the sumptuous food, ingredients for a dinner celebration?

Christmas is spoken of as "the season of joy" and "a time of cheer." But as Christmas comes around, do you sometimes experience things far from joy and cheer? Do you find yourself bogged down and your days filled with busyness? Are you weary after a long year and the numerous problems and difficulties that came your way? Does Christmas seem like one more pressure, one more demand on your time?

All kinds of questions and concerns run through your head as you weave together the Christmas season's events. Will your loved ones appreciate all that you put into making Christmas special for them? Will you be able to fulfill their expectations? Will your plans come to pass as you hope? Will this be a happy Christmas?

Stop for a minute. You may not think you have time to stop, but you should anyway. I want to help you experience calm and peace this Yuletide. Instead of hoping to survive the Christmas season, I'd like you to actually enjoy it! It will mean an exchange, though. You'll have to give up something in your busy life so that you can make space for something better.

You may look at each Christmas as needing to be bigger and better than the last, and you anxiously fill up every moment making preparations toward that goal. But sometimes less is more. Have you stopped to think about whether all the running around is necessary? Is it really making your Christmas season and that of your loved ones happier? Or are you cutting out the truly important things in life in order to select the perfect gifts, arrange the decorations impeccably, and gather the most sumptuous ingredients for a dinner celebration?