

Lessons Learned From Christmas Specials

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Every Christmas movie or TV special has a message to share. They talk about the importance of family, friendship and true love; about Santa and presents. Some are silly, some sentimental, and some are just “interesting”. As a child, I watched them all with wonder and delight. I never thought much about what they were trying to teach. As I matured, I began to give them more thought. Many specials were about Santa Claus and presents and snow and things like that. They seemed fun, but superficial, and I wondered if they didn’t detract from the true meaning of Christmas.

As I’ve grown older I’ve come to wonder that less and less. God’s truth has a way of slipping into anything and transforming it. Rather than be suspicious of the secular world, I’ve learned a better approach is to look at the world through the eyes of faith and find the truth of God hidden in the world around us- and in the TV specials.

For instance, “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” teaches that there is something special about Christmas: Something that transcends the presents, Christmas trees, meals, or decorations. To quote the Grinch, “It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store? What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more?”

And, of course, it does. Christmas means hope. It means that God wasn’t finished with the world then, and God isn’t finished with it now. We are loved so much that God has done something amazing to save us and to show us the way. But here was where “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” fell short. It tells what Christmas isn't, but not what it is.

Luckily, there are more TV specials and we can find an answer to what Christmas is from a boy who loved to carry a blue blanket. In “A Charlie Brown Christmas”, Charlie Brown is struggling with Christmas. He is rejected as director of the Christmas play and asked instead to get a Christmas tree for the production. Charlie picks a forlorn little tree that isn't much more than a branch. Being ridiculed about the tree pushes Charlie Brown over the edge and he finally screams, “Would someone please tell me the true meaning of Christmas?!!” Linus responds, “Sure, Charlie Brown. I can tell you what Christmas is all about.” Linus steps forward and quotes the Christmas story found in Luke 2:1-14.

God’s word sometimes comes in unexpected ways and unexpected places, but the message is still transforming to the world. This Christmas, may you listen for and experience God’s word and truth in every conversation, in every song, and in every Christmas special you watch!