

Troublesome Questions at Christmas

Over 38 years ago as I was asking myself, “What am I doing here?” I had just left a well-paying job as a senior engineer at a Fairchild Semiconductor plant in Portland, Maine to go north to Bangor, ME. “Why?” Several people had also wondered. Not far into my first test in Church History 101 the question resurfaced. The professor had just interrupted our concentration on the blue-book exam to say, “I don’t want to upset any of you, but look out the window.” It was October 9th, and it was snowing! In the years to come I discovered the answers to my first question, but it required asking many other questions.

I still am searching for answers to some of my questions. Strangely enough some of them come up at major holiday/Holy Day times like Christmas. For example, here are a few that are not limited to Christmas season, but they are certainly questions for which I do not have glib answers at Christmas:

1. Why do I have so much when others have so little?
2. How can I best help a person or a family in need?
3. What am I really celebrating at Christmas?
4. Why, when religious people and others celebrate the coming of the “Prince of Peace,” the Festival of Lights, Kwanza, the Winter Solstice or just the “Holiday Spirit” do so many of us overlook or do just the minimum to help people in need?
5. Who visits people in prison, jails or psychiatric wards at Christmas time?
6. Why do we buy more “Stuff” when we often already have so much that we have to dispose of enough “stuff” to make room for our Christmas gifts?
7. Why do some of us try to comfort ourselves when we see a homeless person by saying to ourselves or to whomever we are with, “That person probably prefers to live on the street rather than hold a job”?
8. Why do we encourage children to want “more?”
9. Why are we buying more weapons, personally and nationally, when at least at Christmas we seem to share goodwill and hope for peace?
10. Why don’t those of us who do help at Christmas do so year round?

My specific questions are just that--my questions. If they help you to make sense of this world, feel free to use them. However, if we discover that we are unwilling to help certain groups of people we may need to examine our inner thoughts to find out why. Almost all of us have some bias, dislike, anger or fear that we harbor at some particular group. Often we don’t recognize our feelings because they’re buried in our unconscious minds. If we monitor our feelings and behavior we may be able to understand why. We may also be able to answer the final question. Why is it so often hard for us to be generous with people in need?

If my questions disturb you, let me quote Albert Einstein, 20th century physicist, who once said, “The important thing is not to stop questioning.”

As always, I welcome your [responses](#).

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