

ADVENT CONSPIRACY

presented by



Christmas is Changing the World

We all know the Christmas story is about hope, love, redemption and promise. So, what happened? How did it turn into a time to buy stuff, sit in traffic, pay bills, go to church and pray for lenient return policies? What if we could watch Christmas transform the world before our eyes? Welcome to the Advent Conspiracy.

The concept is simple:

WORSHIP FULLY It starts with Jesus. It ends with Jesus. Advent is a time to put down our burdens and lift up a song up to our God. It's a time for prayers from around the world to mingle in the air. Service, love, and care become worship, and the joy of others becomes our joy.

SPEND LESS This isn't about suffering and sacrifice. Our kids love gifts. That's ok. But how often do we buy presents for no other reason than obligation? What if Christians didn't do that? Spending less is about being free to have more fun, presence, closeness, life. For ideas, check out: www.rethinkingchristmas.com.

GIVE MORE For Christmas God gave us his son. Jesus gave himself. Give someone your time for Christmas. Go sledding. Make something. Bake, sing, walk, talk, play, laugh, write a letter. When the people we serve get clean water, it provides time—time they used to spend hauling water is now spent with family. Give time. Give yourself.

LOVE ALL Love is boundless. It can't be hoarded, and it gets bigger when given away. It is for our families, but not limited to them. What if we stopped underestimating the power of love? Could we take on something huge—like the world water crisis?



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CHRISTMAS
WITH
LIVING
WATER



Worship Fully

Christmas begins with a baby born in a manger. He changed the course of the stars and turned fathers' hearts to their children. The heavens sang his praise as angels sang glory to God in the highest and on earth his peace. Shepherds praised God and traveled to Bethlehem to see him. Magi journeyed from the East to worship him. His mother treasured these things in her heart. They called him "Immanuel"—"God with us." He proclaimed his presence to the end of the age. What we do unto others, we do unto him.

Again this Christmas, babies will be born in ramshackle homes. Herod will not try to kill them, but their drinking water will. Again Jesus will turn our hearts to children. We who still hear angels will journey to see Christ in the least of these. Our camels traded for drill rigs, we will bear the gift of life—clean drinking water, offered in Jesus' name. Mothers will treasure these things in their hearts.

This is full worship. Worship derives from Old-English words meaning "worth-ship." What we give worth to is what we worship: possessions, God, shopping, children, money, Jesus. We worship all the time. Advent is a time to consciously direct our worship towards Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. A time to worship fully.



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Spend Less

“For God so loved the world he gave us a shopping season.”

Wait a minute... Jesus came to give abundant life. So why does Christmas leave us feeling so spent? When we spend less anxiety, energy, worry, and money on things that don't matter, then the things that do will come to the surface of our lives. We all love Jesus, but it's hard to feel it when life gets clogged with obligation, traffic, stores, and debt.

Seek out just a few people you trust and agree that this year you won't commodify your love for each other. Figure out how to give each other time, attention, and love, then channel the money you save into something that reflects the heart of Jesus.

Christmas abounds with God's energy. If we don't misspend it, we will find ourselves free to worship, love, and give more authentically. Less than 1 percent of America's annual Christmas budget could provide a year's worth of safe water access to the 783 million people without it. That would honor God and save lives, but spending less is really about us having more life.*

* The National Retail Foundation reported America's 2013 Christmas spending at www.nrf.com/media/press-releases/holiday-retail-sales-come-nrf-expectations. Our calculations are based on 2012 research from the International Water and Sanitation Centre at www.ircwash.org/sites/default/files/IRC-2012-Providing.pdf.



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Give More

When you give a lot of gifts are you really giving much? People on their deathbeds never want more stuff. They want time—that's what's really valuable. Life itself is God's gift of time to us. In the greatest Christmas gift of all—Jesus—God gave us a relationship with a person. We're giving more when we give our time. Giving ourselves to others is the original Christmas tradition.

Make a thoughtful gift that shows someone you've been paying attention. Spend time with the kids. Sled, ride a bike, play a game, take a hike, go fishing. Give a massage, babysit, fly a kite, talk. Buy a pound of special coffee you'll only drink with mom. Write a poem, draw a picture, bake something yummy. By giving time you'll spend less; you'll be free to give away a little of what you saved, and God will multiply it.

Each year in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, women spend a collective 40 billion hours just hauling water. On average, \$25 provides water access for a family of five for one year. Imagine if mothers could give 40 billion hours to their children instead of hauling water. That's a lot of time, a lot of love, and a lot of joy.



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Love All

The Christmas story is a love story. Scripture's grand story of God getting his long-since-fallen people back takes a turn at the manger. It continues with the cross and our Savior's perfect love transforming even the most tragic defeat into the ultimate victory.

This is a season for love to triumph. It's a season for love to make anything possible. Beyond the white-noise of holiday frenzy, God has never stopped inviting us into his heart. We know how our love story ends. It ends with God and the Church inviting all who are thirsty to drink of the free gift of the water of life. The door to this possibility opens in a manger.

We tell the story of Christmas with our lives. It can be about the prophets or about the profits. It can be about a newborn king or a gift-wrapped box and a thing. It can be about time spent with our families and clean water for the least of these, or about shopping, lines, payments, and fines. It can start at the manger and end with redemption, or start at the mall and end with convention. It's not that there's something wrong with the shopping mall—it's that the better story is about loving all.

