Christmas at the Caroline House

Christmas at the Caroline House is almost here!

Tickets are $15 and can be purchased online or in the bookstore! We are also in need of volunteers. Please go to briarwood.org/cch to purchase tickets or to volunteer at one of the three sessions available. If you have purchased your tickets online, you are welcome to come pick up your ticket outside the bookstore on Sunday, November 17 before or after Sunday school.

Christmas celebrations provide us a great opportunity for fellowship around a table with friends and loved ones. They also provide us an opportunity to point loved ones to the true message of the Gospel. Please consider inviting someone who is unchurched to our Christmas at the Caroline House where they can enjoy fellowship, beautiful decorations and a clear presentation of the truth of why we celebrate Christmas!

Christmas Makes the Gospel Accessible

This is an adapted excerpt from Tim Keller’s *Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth behind the Birth of Christ* (Viking, 2016).

Christmas is the only Christian holy day that is also a major secular holiday—arguably our culture’s biggest. The result is two different celebrations, each observed by millions of people at the same time. This brings some discomfort on both sides. Many Christians can’t help but notice that more and more of the public festivities surrounding Christmas studiously avoid any references to its Christian origins. The background music in stores is moving from “Joy to the World” to “Have a
Holly, Jolly Christmas.” The holiday is promoted as a time for family, for giving, and for peace in the world. “Christmas is a wonderful, secular holiday,” one enthusiast wrote at the now-defunct website Gawker.

On the other hand, nonreligious people can’t help but find that the older meaning of Christmas keeps intruding uninvited, for instance, through the music of traditional Christmas carols. It can be irritating to have to answer their child’s question, “What does that music mean—’born to give them second birth’?”

As a Christian believer, I’m glad to share the virtues of the day with the entirety of society. The secular Christmas is a festival of lights, a time for family gatherings, and a season to generously give to those closest to us and to those in greatest need. These practices are enriching to everyone, and they are genuinely congruent with the Christian origins of the celebration.

Because of the commercial indispensability of Christmas, it will remain with us as a secular festival. My fear is, however, that its true roots will become more and more hidden to most of the population. The emphasis on light in darkness comes from the Christian belief that the world’s hope comes from outside of it. The giving of gifts is a natural response to Jesus’s stupendous act of self-giving, when he laid aside his glory and was born into the human race. The concern for the needy recalls that the Son of God was born not into an aristocratic family but into a poor one. The Lord of the universe identified with the least and the most excluded of the human race.

These are powerful themes, but every one of them is a two-edged sword. Jesus comes as the Light, because we’re too spiritually blind to find our own way. Jesus became mortal and died because we’re too morally ruined to be pardoned any other way. Jesus gave himself to us, and so we must give ourselves wholly to him. We are, therefore, “not [our] own” (1 Cor. 6:19).

Christmas, like God himself, is both more wondrous and more threatening than we imagine.

Every year our increasingly secular Western society becomes less aware of its own historical roots, many of which are the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Yet once a year at Christmas these basic truths become a bit more accessible to an enormous audience. At countless gatherings, concerts, parties, and other events, even when most participants are nonreligious, the essentials of the faith can sometimes become visible.

As an example, let’s ask some questions of the famous Christmas carol “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” heard in malls, in grocery stores, and on street corners. Who is Jesus? He is “everlasting Lord,” who from “highest heaven” comes down to be the “offspring of the virgin’s womb.” What did he come to do? His mission is to see “God and sinners reconciled.” How did he accomplish it? He “lays his glory by,” that we “no more may die.” How can this life be ours? Through an inward, spiritual regeneration so radical that it can be called “the second birth.” With brilliant economy of style, the carol gives us a summary of the entire Christian teaching.

While few of the most familiar Christmas songs and Bible readings are that comprehensive, it remains that one season a year hundreds of millions of people, if they would take the trouble to ask these kinds of questions, would have this same knowledge available to them.

To understand Christmas is to understand basic Christianity, the gospel.
HERE ARE SOME OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON THIS YEAR:

Operation Christmas Child
Briarwood participates every Christmas season in the Samaritan’s Purse Operation Christmas Child. Shoeboxes are made available beginning November 3 in the Ministries Lobby and prior to this in the Children’s Ministry Office on the second floor of the Admin building. Shoeboxes may be turned in by November 17, and you are asked to include $9 for shipping cost. If you pay the shipping online, you’ll receive a tracking label. Otherwise, you may place this in the box. Turn boxes in at the Children’s Auditorium hallway. Please, no candy or toothpaste this year. For more information visit the Samaritan’s Purse website.

Angel Tree
Each year, Briarwood joins with Prison Fellowship to support Angel Tree, which enables children of prisoners to receive Christmas gifts. This year’s Angel Trees will be in the Ministry and Chapel Lobbies November 3 and 10, enabling you to take your Angel request on those dates and return your gifts by November 17. During the week, there is a designated cart outside the Church Receptionist office, and on Sundays, the cart is in the Worship Center Lobby. Please give a child a wonderful Christmas memory!
Saturday, February 1, 2020

Over three energetic and interactive sessions, discover how tracing the Bible’s major themes helps us to grasp its important message.

For more information or to register go to briarwood.org/women

**Early Bird special ends on November 30!**

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THE BOOK OF JAMES

STEADFAST

FAITHFULLY LIVING THE WORD OF GOD

JUNE 11-13, 2020 / INDIANAPOLIS, IN

Mark your calendars and Register Now!

The Gospel Coalition Women’s Conference will be held on June 11-13, 2020 in Indianapolis, IN. This year’s focus will be on the book of James. We will not coordinate travel or housing arrangements. However, we would like to have a list of everyone going so that we can coordinate times to meet as a group at the event.

*Please use code BRIARWOOD to receive a discount at checkout.*
As we look to prepare our hearts for the Christmas season, let us not forget to embrace Thanksgiving and take time to express our gratitude and thankfulness to our Lord and Savior for His loving care and the hope He secured for us.

LOVE SHED ABROAD
(from the “Valley of Vision”)

GRACIOUS GOD,

My heart praises thee for the wonder of thy love in Jesus;
He is heaven’s darling, but is for me the incarnate, despised, rejected, crucified sin-bearer;
   In him thy grace has almost out-graced itself,
   In him thy love to rebels has reached its height;
   O to love thee with a love like this!
My heart is stone, melt it with thy love,
My heart is locked, let thy love be the master key to open it;
O Father, I adore thee for thy great love in the gift of Jesus,
O Jesus, I bless thee for resigning thy life for me,
O Holy Spirit, I thank thee for revealing to me this mystery;
Great God, let thy Son see in me the travail of his soul!
Bring me away from my false trusts to rest in him, and him only.
Let me not be so callous to his merit as not to love him,
   So indifferent to his blood as not to desire cleansing.
   Lord Jesus, Master, Redeemer, Saviour,
   Come and take entire possession of me;
   This is thy right by purchase.
In the arms of love enfold and subdue my wilful spirit.
   Take, sanctify, use my every faculty.
   I am not ashamed of my hope,
   Nor has my confidence led me into confusion.
I trusted in thee regarding my innumerable sins,
   And thou hast cast them behind thy back.
I trusted in thee when evils encompassed me,
   And thou broughtest me out into a wealthy place.
I trusted in thee in an hour of distress,
   And thou didst not fail me, though faith trembled.
O God of the eternal choice,
O God of the restored possession purchased on the tree,
O God of the effectual call,
   Father, Son, Holy Spirit,
I adore thy glory, honour, majesty, power, dominion for ever.
Below are some pictures from the Lydia Luncheon, the Graduates & Career, Joyful Hearts, and Faithful Followers Sunday Lunch, and Fall Studies!