



My *stressed* Child,

Let Me enlighten the eyes
of your **heart** so that you will experience
the **hope** I've called you to and the riches of
My glorious *inheritance*. I'll show you the
wonder of My **great love**.

Let Me *restore* the **joy** of your salvation
and grant you a *willing spirit*.

Lifting Your Weary **Heart**,
YOUR ROCK of AGES

(Ephesians 4:48; Psalm 47:7; Psalm 54:42)

*Our hearts grow tender with childhood memories and love of kindred,
and we are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a
child again at Christmas-time. — LAURA INGALLS WILDER*

childlike wonder

BELINDA ELLIOT REALIZED that for the last few years she had been caught up in the Christmas rat race. She raced through malls at breakneck speed, searching for the perfect gifts. She found herself still shopping at closing time on Christmas Eve. She confessed that she'd been guilty of buying presents on the way out of town to visit family members, and even had to wrap them in the car as her husband sped down the interstate trying not to be late again.

Somehow Christmas had turned into one big exhausting race to the finish line. Belinda felt like she was always rushing but never able to catch up. Christmas hadn't always been a blurry rush. She flashed back to Christmases of her childhood when her neighborhood turned into a sea of Christmas lights and decorations, and her parents would drive them around to see all the magical lights.

She remembered the tranquil setting of their home decorated with green garlands and holly berries, twinkling lights, stockings hung on the mantle and a tall tree adorned with beautiful ornaments. In the days leading up to Christmas, Belinda recalled how much she had enjoyed lying in front of their fireplace at night and



gazing at their living room lit up only by the small colorful lights on their Christmas tree.

There was a time when Christmas was her favorite time of the year and a delightful holiday she could savor for weeks.

Why does Christmas seem to lose that magical quality as we get older? Belinda wondered.

Perhaps it was because, as adults, we are now responsible for all the things we never had to worry about as kids—brainstorming the perfect gift for each of our loved ones, fighting the traffic and crowded malls to spend hours shopping, writing Christmas cards until our hands cramp, decorating the house, cooking for numerous Christmas parties or family gatherings—the list could go on and on.

Belinda decided not to let the Christmas rat race triumph this year.

She decided to change her approach to Christmas. She wouldn't let Christmas preparations and shopping get the best of her. Instead, she would truly enjoy the holiday and take time to remember the reason for the season. *But how?*

She still needed to get everything done just like every year, but she didn't want to get caught up in the commercialism or stress as she usually did. She wanted to recapture that amazement and wonder that she had felt during the holidays as a child. So she began with a simple prayer.

Lord, help me keep You at the center of all I do for Christmas this year.

A few days later, Belinda was reading in the book of Ephesians and stopped to ponder a verse. She was intrigued by Paul's prayer for the church at Ephesus: "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18).

That's it! Belinda thought. She wanted her eyes opened again to the hope and glorious inheritance Christ Jesus offers. That's where the true magic of Christmas lies.

CHILD LIKE WONDER

Belinda remembered that we celebrate Christmas because the baby born in a stable so many years ago brought us hope and salvation; we give gifts to those we love because we remember the greatest gift ever given—God’s Son—so that we could have a relationship with the Father through Christ, who forgives our sins. And as the Father’s adopted sons and daughters, we have heaven to look forward to, where Jesus is preparing a place for us.

These are truths that we all know as Christians, but they can often get lost in the Christmas rush when we get “holidazed.” Belinda decided not to let these truths fall to the sidelines this year.

As she kept God’s promises at the forefront of her mind, an interesting thing happened. The season became magical once again. Christmas lights seemed brighter, people seemed merrier and she found Christmas full of good cheer once again.

Even more amazing, Belinda discovered that as she focused on Christ, the aggravating preparation details that usually made her feel stressed out fell nicely into place. Her house was even more decorated than it had been in years past. She actually finished her Christmas shopping and even wrapped most of the presents without waiting until the last minute.

The best part for Belinda was rediscovering her Christmas joy. Rather than approaching the holiday with dread because of everything she needed to do, she found herself approaching the festivities with the wide-eyed wonder of a child once again.

December 25th was a truly special day with her family and friends, reflecting on the marvelous love and grace Christ has given us.

Are you trapped in the midst of the Christmas rat race?

If so, take Belinda’s challenge. Slow down and let Christ take back Christmas in your life. May you once again enjoy this wondrous season with the joy and faith of a child.

My *Disillusioned One*,

Come to Me like a little **child**.

Put your **hope** in My **good** name.

Call unto Me and I will *answer* you.

I'll reveal **great** and *mighty* things

to you that you don't already know.

My *precepts* are right,

bringing **joy** to your **heart**.

And My *commands* are **radiant**,

restoring the *sparkle* in your eyes.

Let My joy be your *strength*.

Joyfully,

YOUR GOD of WONDER

(Mark 40:45; Psalm 52:9; Jeremiab 33:3; Psalm 49:8-9; Nebemiab 8:40)

CHILDLIKE WONDER

Following Jesus cannot be done at a sprint. If we want to follow someone, we can't go faster than the one who is leading.

—JOHN ORTBERG

DEAREST FATHER:

Thank You for sending Jesus to enable me to experience abundant life. Help me stand in awe of Your deeds. You're incomparable! Your Name is above all other names. Forgive me for the times when I let other people or things in my life slip into first place. Help me prioritize my relationship with You this Christmas and throughout the year. Father, give me Your perspective on my life. I need You to enlighten my eyes so that I can live in Your hope each day. I'm asking You to restore the wonder of Christmas. Help me enjoy life again. Give me a new sense of appreciation and a childlike faith that pleases You! Let me know the hope to which You've called me and the riches of Your glorious inheritance. You're truly the Best! 🎁