



The Nourishing Vocation Project Near and Now Courageous Conversation Guide

Contemplating Christmas
By David Thomas '29

Warm-up Question

What is the meaning of Christmas for you?



Photo by [Roberto Nickson](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

Reading

*Christmas sets the centre on the edge;
The edge of town, the outhouse of the inn,
The fringe of empire, far from privilege
And power, on the edge and outer spin
Of turning worlds, a margin of small stars
That edge a galaxy itself light years
From some unguessed at cosmic origin.
Christmas sets the centre at the edge.*

*And from this day our world is re-aligned
A tiny seed unfolding in the womb
Becomes the source from which we all unfold
And flower into being. We are healed,
The end begins, the tomb becomes a womb,
For now in him all things are re-aligned.*

-Malcolm Guite

- Do you agree with Guite's assertion that Christmas sets the center on the edge? Why or why not?

Reflection and Discussion Questions

Christmas is a time of centrality. Groups of people, be they families, communities, or friends gather together in a time of unity, and simply being together is one of the major themes of the holiday. This means, however, that it's important to be intentional about what it is we choose to gather around.

The true meaning of Christmas, while a common topic of Hallmark Christmas movies, is something that is easy to lose sight of in our modern celebrations. And while all it takes is one viewing of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" to show us that our modern, hyper-commercialized idea of Christmas is somewhat off from its meaning, Malcolm Guite's sonnet "Christmas on the Edge" sets a center for the season far off from what is typical. Instead of even simply remarking on our need to bring the outside in, Guite describes a complete relocation: a radical, significant change in our perspective.

This change is the kind of change we can see in much of Jesus' ministry, as he demonstrates the kind of radical reversal in which "the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:16). Christmas is, in essence, the beginning of this shift in the order of our world, as "from this day our world is realigned". Christmas asks us to consider where our lives are centered, and invites us into an opportunity where we, like the world, can recenter not on what the world values, but on what God values.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important that God "sets the centre at the edge"?
2. What does it mean to center your life around something?
3. Where do you see the world around you or the community you're in centering itself?
4. Where does your life center right now? Is that where you want it to be centered?

5. What are some areas in which you feel a need to break from the values of the world and focus on your personal values or God's values?
6. How can changing what you center yourself around allow you to "flower into being"?
7. Where are the "edges" in our world today? How can we bring them into the center?

Activity Suggestions

Collective Activity: Begin by thinking of ten parts of your life—these can be commitments, hobbies, values, or anything that you think is important, and write them down on post-it notes. Next, on a piece of paper, draw 3 concentric circles. Consider where these 10 elements of your life are currently positioned in terms of centrality of your life, and place them on the circles. The inside circle should have 1-2 items, the second circle 3-4, and the outer circle 5-6. Finally, spend some time reflecting on where these elements are placed. Which elements do you wish were less central to your life? Which do you wish were more central? Feel free to re-organize the post-it notes to what you think would be a more ideal organization.

Personal Activity: Throughout your Christmas celebrations this year, spend some time considering how recentering during this season can impact your life for the rest of the year.

VOCARE

Invite closing thoughts about VOCARE as it relates to this topic.

What **VALUES** did this discussion highlight for you?

What are you invited to be **OPEN to** as you think about this topic?

What voices (literal or metaphorical) have **CALLED** to you through this conversation?

What has captured your **ATTENTION** during this discussion?

What **REGRETS** have come to mind for you by considering this topic?

What is one personal **EXPERIENCE** that this discussion has brought to mind for you?

What is **JUST ONE THING** that you will take away from or carry with you from this Near and Now Courageous Conversation?

"Christmas on the Edge." *Malcolm Guite*, 23 Dec. 2011,

malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2011/12/23/christmas-on-the-edge/.