

Fran and Jesus on the Job: Christmas

Presented by Mary Lowman

Air Dates: December 16-20, 2024

Day One

As we all find ourselves swallowed up by our preparations for Christmas, it's good to remember Christmas holds no true meaning unless we know that Jesus came for one purpose: to die on a cross and be raised again so we could be redeemed from our sins.

I believe we have a great opportunity during Christmas to reach out to people with the good news of the gospel because typically people are more open to talking about religious matters at this time of year. This week I have another Fran and Jesus story as Fran begins to see what she can do during this Christmas season to tell the story of Jesus—the whole story—to her friends at work.

She and her friend Louise are driving home from church this Sunday afternoon and Louise says, "Pastor's sermon was very challenging, don't you think, Fran?"

"You mean about finding ways to reach people during Christmas?" she responds. "Yeah, it made me think about what I could do at the office."

"It just makes me sick the way Christmas is treated around there," Louise comments. "I mean, nobody even mentions Jesus. It's just an excuse for parties and drinking and..."

"Yeah, do you remember last year's Christmas party?" Fran continues. "I left after dinner; it was too crazy for me."

"I stayed awhile longer, but I wished I had left when you did," Louise says. "Well, what do you think we could do to try to change that and make people see what Christmas is all about?"

"We could invite people to our church concert," Fran says. "I did that last year, and Andy brought his family. They really enjoyed the music."

"That's a good idea," Louise says. "But there must be something we can do right in the office..."

"Oh, you have to be careful," Fran says, "or we'll be accused of being politically incorrect!"

"Hey, Mom," Drew pipes in from the back seat, "why don't you and Louise have your own party at our house."

"Well, hon, I don't think..." Fran starts and then stops. "Drew, you know, that's not a bad idea."

"Actually, it's a great idea, Drew," Louise says. "Why don't we, Fran? Then we can control what goes on, have some great fun, and somehow get the gospel in."

"Let's do it, Louise," Fran says with enthusiasm.

"And we'll help, Mom," Alice volunteers.

"You bet," they agree. All afternoon they plan the party, write the invitations, and then they pray God will use it to help them tell the true story of Christmas. What could you do to reach out during this Christmas season? It's a great opportunity. Don't let it get lost in the frenzy of celebrations.

Day Two

Do you sometimes feel sick at this time of year over the godless celebrations of Christmas? I want to challenge all of us to take Christmas back from its secularized version and use this time of year as an opportunity to reach out to people with the whole story of Christmas—that Jesus came as a baby for one reason, to die on a cross so that we could go to heaven.

Fran and Louise have decided they want to do something different this year. Instead of having her usual Christmas party for her friends at church, she and Louise decided to have a party for people at work. Since it will be in her home, Fran can control the menu and the tone of the party, and she and Louise have thought of a creative way to get the gospel in.

This Sunday evening, after Louise left, she and the kids decide to get out some of the decorations for Christmas. "Oh, here's my beautiful Christmas crèche that Aunt Regina gave me," Fran says as she carefully unwraps each beautiful piece.

"Are you gonna put it on the mantel again this year, Mom?" Drew asks.

"Yeah, I think that's the best place..." Fran starts, and then a thought overtakes her. "Hey, kids, would you mind if I took this to the office this year? I could display it on my credenza at work, and maybe it would start some conversations."

"But Mommy, we always have it on our mantel," Alice objects. "It's so pretty. It might get broke at work."

"I know, Alice," Fran says, "and I've been so careful with it all these years. It's a beautiful treasure."

"You said it cost a lot of money," Alice adds.

"Hmm, I'm sure it did. But you know, Alice, if it would help someone hear about Jesus, don't you think it would be worth it to put it in my office this year?" Fran asks.

"Well," Alice says, "since you put it that way."

The next day Fran takes her beautiful family treasure to the office and carefully displays it on her credenza. One of her peers, Janice, comes in just as she is putting it out.

"What's that, Fran?" she asks. "Oh, a manger set. That's nice." She begins to look at it closely. "Actually, it's exquisite. Where did you get it?"

Fran explains the family history of her crèche and then says, "I just wanted to find a way to remind myself and everybody else about the real reason we have Christmas. I think it sometimes gets lost in all the craziness, don't you?"

"The real reason?" Janice says. "What do you mean?"

What a great question. Just what Fran had hoped for. "You know, it would take longer than we've got right now to answer that question. How about lunch today?"

"Lunch with me?" Janice seems surprised. She and Fran just never have had an opportunity to get to know each other very well. But they agree to meet for lunch, where Fran has an open door to talk about the real meaning of Christmas.

What could you do in your office or workplace this Christmas that might start a meaningful conversation? Think about it.

Day Three

Since it's very close to Christmas, I'm suggesting we ask God for creative ideas on how we can use the celebration of Christmas to open some new doors of witnessing. Fran and Louise have caught that vision this year, and they're planning a party at Fran's house for their office friends.

In addition, Fran took a beautiful family crèche to her office in hopes it would generate some conversations and questions that would offer opportunities to share the good news about Jesus, and it has done so already.

Janice is a co-worker Fran hasn't really gotten to know, but she showed an interest in Fran's manger scene. That has led to a luncheon together. As they sit down to eat, Fran asks, "How does your family usually celebrate Christmas?"

"Oh, we just exchange gifts on Christmas Eve like everyone else, I guess," Janice says. "My kids have outgrown Santa Claus, but when they were little, that was a lot of fun."

"Do you have any special programs at your church?" Fran continues to probe.

"Well, actually we don't go to church, sorry to say," Janice hangs her head a bit. "You see, my husband is an...atheist...or so he says. So, we haven't been to church since we've been married. I miss it; I used to go when I was kid, at least at Christmas and Easter."

"Oh, that's too bad," Fran says. "I'd miss church, too, especially during Christmas. We have such beautiful programs at our church. In fact, if you'd like to, I'd be glad to pick up you and the kids for one of our concerts."

Janice looks at Fran. "Well, I don't think my husband would like that," she says, then she hesitates. "You know, I don't care whether he likes it or not. I would just love to go to church this Christmas."

"Great," Fran says, and they arrange the date and time. Then Fran says, "It's interesting that your husband is an atheist, but you are not, I gather."

"No, I believe in God, and I want my kids to believe in God, too," Janice says.

"Do you think they will, since their daddy doesn't?" Fran asks.

"I doubt it," Janice says sadly. "Philip, my twelve-year-old, already makes jokes about Christians and church, just like his dad does. I don't like it, but what can I say?"

"Yeah, I see what you mean," Fran says. "Did you know your husband was an atheist when you married him?"

"Yeah, but I didn't think it would make any difference," Janice says. "But the longer I'm married, the more it bothers me. I want to be a religious person."

"You know, Janice, the reason you feel that way is because we all have a great God-shaped void inside us and he's the only one who can fill it up," and with that Fran has a marvelous opportunity to tell Janice how Jesus wants to make her more than a religious person but a new person in Christ.

Reach out to someone new this Christmas, someone you don't know so well at your job or in your neighborhood. You might be as surprised as Fran is to discover how easy it is to share the gospel, especially during the Christmas season.

Day Four

Have you been to any Christmas parties yet this season? Fran and Louise have decided to have a different party this year. Instead of inviting their Christian friends from church, they've invited all their friends at the office, most of whom are not Christians.

Fran gets up early this Saturday morning, knowing she has lots to do to get ready for the party tonight. Louise comes over later in the morning to help. She's been cooking all week to have everything ready, and the kids are excited to help, too.

About mid-afternoon, Fran says, "Hey, you guys, we need to practice our Christmas play." They decided after everyone eats and they have some fun games, the four of them will re-enact the Christmas story. Fran brought costumes home from church, Louise made a manger, Alice put her best doll in the manger, and Drew made cardboard cut outs of a sheep and a cow.

The evening goes really nice. Fran is so pleased that twenty-three people came, including Janice and her husband, George. She whispered to Fran, "I'd never get him to church, but he's always ready for a party!" George says he is an atheist.

Everybody seems to be having a great time; there's lots of laughter and clean fun. Finally, it's time for the play. Louise says, "Well, since this is a Christmas party, we wanted to have something special—a Christmas play, with the help of Drew and Alice."

At first people seem a little uncomfortable, but as Louise and Fran get the manger in place, everyone finds a seat so they can watch. Alice is an angel, and she quotes from Luke 2: *Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy*. She looks like an angel, and everyone applauds when she finishes. Children can break down barriers between people very easily, Fran notes to herself.

They go through their prepared play, telling the story of Christmas. Drew is a shepherd, and Fran and Louise play Mary and Joseph. Then the kids sing a Christmas song they learned at church, which tells why Jesus came to a manger.

As it ends, there's not a sound in the house, and not a few are dabbing tears away. Louise says, "Well, we just wanted to share with you what Christmas means to us. You know, lots of people are celebrating Christmas but they don't really know Jesus. I'm so glad that when I was sixteen years old, I found out who Jesus is, and he became my Savior."

And without embarrassment, Louise shares her testimony and then leads in a prayer at the end of their party. Let's take back Christmas and find better ways to celebrate it.

Day Five

Have you been so busy getting ready for Christmas that you've lost sight of its real meaning? That is easy to do. I've been trying to encourage all of us to see the Christmas season as an opportunity for evangelistic outreach.

Louise and Fran decided to have a Christmas party for their friends at work, and at the end of the party they gave a Christmas play, with the help of Fran's kids. Then Louise briefly shared her testimony and closed their party in prayer.

As their guests were leaving, everyone commented on how nice the party was. Andy, Fran's good friend from the Art Department, said to her, "This was the nicest Christmas party I've ever been to. Really makes you stop and remember what Christmas is all about."

Fran noticed Janice and George kept hanging around, as though they were reluctant to leave. Finally, everyone had gone except them, and Fran said, "You guys want to have another cup of coffee before you hit the road?" She expected them to refuse, but to her surprise, they stayed. Fran sent her kids off to bed, and the four of them sat around the table.

Janice said, "Fran, thanks for inviting us. I'm really glad we've gotten to know each other. Your kids are so cute."

"Thanks, Janice," Fran says.

"I couldn't believe how much they had memorized," Janice comments.

"Well, they've been quoting the Christmas story at church since they could talk, practically, so they know it pretty good," Fran says.

"I wish our kids..." Janice starts, then catches herself.

"What she started to say," George adds quietly, "is that she wishes our kids went to church like yours. But, well, I just don't believe in God so why should they waste their time? However, after watching your kids tonight, I can see how much they enjoyed it. Maybe I should let 'em go at Christmas time."

"Oh, honey, that would be wonderful," Janice lights up.

For over an hour Janice and George sit at the table with Fran and Louise talking about why George decided to be an atheist and why Fran and Louise believe in God and Jesus. It was an absolutely amazing conversation.

"Wow, hon, it's after midnight," George finally says. "We need to go."

"I'm so glad you stayed," Fran says. "Listen, George, why don't you come with the family to our Christmas concert tomorrow night. We'd love to have you."

"I don't know," he says, "I'll think about it. This is kinda heavy for me."

"Well, you think about it," Louise says, "and we'll talk to you tomorrow."

As they leave, Louise and Fran take time to pray God will continue to work on George's heart. "Underneath that tough exterior is a man who knows he doesn't have all the answers, Fran," Louise says, and they agree that this party was a divine appointment for George.

Look for your divine opportunities this Christmas.