

A Christmas Carol – From Death to Life

Using Popular Stories to share the Gospel Story

Why use a popular, fictional book as a way to share the Gospel message? Much of Scripture is stories that teach us about who God is and who He created us to be. Stories are how people learn and can apply ideas or moral concepts to their lives. While *A Christmas Carol* isn't overtly Christian, we can take this popular story and help people see how the concepts of moving from hard-hearted to open-handed are Christian concepts that point back to a transformative God that will "give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." Ezekiel 36:26-27"

Gospel Themes

A Christmas Carol shares the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, who had to confront how his values and choices would have eternal, negative impacts through visits to Christmas Past, Present and Future. This tale shows us how we each must confront our sin and chose to turn from our old lives to follow God through belief in Christ and allow the Spirit to transform our lives into a new creation.

This story can be treated as a parable. Through this story we can take away several themes and implications of the Gospel message for conversion and transformation.

Key Symbols

Marley's Chains – made from what he valued in life

Ghost of Christmas Past – memories and experiences that led to Scrooge to be hard-hearted

Ghost of Christmas Present – shows the happiness of families without material wealth

Ghost of Christmas Future – the uncertainty and fear of the future, the future can be changed

Scrooge's Gravestone – reflection on the legacy Scrooge leaves behind and what fates awaits him

Ignorance and Want – Ignorance is Scrooge's downfall, he chooses to ignore the needs and wants of others

Turkey – symbolic of Scrooge's transformation and desire to care about others and be generous

Quotes – From Scenes to Demonstrate Gospel Points

Scene 1 – The Problem

"Bah!" said Scrooge. "Humbug!"

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What right have your to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough." "Come, then," returned the nephew gaily, "What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

On goodwill at Christmas... “And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!”

Gospel Connection: celebration, happiness, and success aren't tied to money. In Scripture, we learn that joy doesn't come from material possessions, but resting in the promises of Christ.

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 1 Timothy 6:17

Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. 2 Corinthians 6:10

Scene 2 – The Ghost

“Man of the worldly!” replied the Ghost, “do you believe in me or not?”

“I wear the chains I forged in life,” replied the Ghost. “I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?”

“Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness!” – Ghost

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!”

Gospel Connection: We use our lives on earth to bring glory to God, grow in holiness and share God's love with others. There are eternal consequences to living apart from God and putting our faith in the wrong things.

8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:8-10

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Romans 12:9-10

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21

Scene 3 – Christmas Past

When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and, shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas.

“A small matter,” said the Ghost, “to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.” “Small!” echoed Scrooge. Ghost, “Why, is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?”

“He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that this power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count em up; what then? The happiness he gives is quite as great as if cost a fortune.” – Scrooge

Gospel Connection: The attitude of a person; their hospitality and invitation to belong in community is worth more than the money spent to create an experience.

12 Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”
Luke 14:12-14

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10: 24-25

8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace 1 Timothy 4:8-10

Scene 4 – Christmas Present

Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one...Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed: “A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears, God bless us!” Which all the family re-echoed. “God bless us everyone!” said Tiny Tim, that last of all. He sat very close to his father’s side, upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him. “Spirit,” said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, “tell me if Tiny Tim will live.”

“Man,” said the Ghost, “Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be that, in the sign of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man’s child.”

“I have no patience with him,” observed Scrooge’s niece. Scrooge’s niece’s sisters, and all the other ladies, expressed the same opinion. “Oh I have!” said Scrooge’s nephew. “I am sorry for him; I couldn’t be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his whims! Himself always.”

Gospel Connection: Our value doesn’t come from our financial abilities; it is our character that matters to others and our heart that matters to God. God is the author of life who creates people with inherent value and worth.

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Psalm 139:13-14

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he[b] predestined us for adoption to sonship[c] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9 he[d] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. Ephesians 1:4-10

Scene 5 - Christmas Future

“Ghost of the Future!” he exclaimed, “I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?”

“Good Spirit,” he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it, your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me by an altered life?” The kind hand trembled. “I will honour Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponges away the writing on this stone!”

Gospel Connection: Every person faces the choice to follow that way of Christ or remain in their chains; as the Spirit convicts of our sin, we can choose to repent and turn towards God. This is the moment of Scrooge’s conversion, the climax of every person’s story is coming to the place of understanding their sin and its eternal impact and the choice to fear God and follow Him, allowing the Spirit to transform their life.

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:23-24

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. Matthew 7:13-14

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household. Acts 16:29-34

Scene 6 - The Transformation

Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset...his own heart laughed, and that was quite enough for him.

It was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim said observed, God Bless Us, Every One!

Gospel Connection: Conversion results in transformation; this is the goal we have for those around us to see their lives radically transformed and for them to discover joy in the Lord.

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:16-19

9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. 12 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:9-14

22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Galatians 4:22-24