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## Christmas PRAISE REPORT

Praise the Lord that a **West Virginia** customer contacted CLA when her local bank manager took down a manger scene but allowed Santa decorations to remain. After receiving information from attorneys for CLA, this customer went back to the bank manager to let her know it was legal for the bank to display a manger scene for Christmas. The manager put the nativity scene back up immediately.

Praise the Lord that a CLA caller from **Utah** noticed that the manger scene had disappeared from his local library after someone complained. He ordered a copy of CLA's *Keeping Christ in Christmas* for the city attorney and librarian, and the manger scene was returned.

Praise the Lord that a **Florida** grandmother decided to bring Christmas back to her public school "Winter Concert." Her 9-year-old grandson had asked her to sing a Christmas carol at the program. She tipped off a few other people in the audience, and at the end of the program she stood up and began to sing *Silent Night*. The audience loved it, and almost everyone stood up and joined in.

Praise the Lord that a disabled museum worker in **Florida** called CLA for information and then asked his supervisor if he could wear a Merry Christmas button while on duty. The supervisor said the museum, as a state entity, did not promote religion, but she had no objection to the disabled worker

wearing his own personal holiday button. His supervisor pointed out that carolers entertain annually at the state Capitol building, and the museum had previously hosted an exhibit of holiday traditions.

Praise the Lord that one **New York** school district added a Christmas nativity scene to stand beside the Menorah and Islamic star and crescent that were already being displayed at district schools for the holidays. Public schools are legally permitted to include religious displays along with secular displays for the holiday season. School boards are also permitted to continue to have Christmas vacations and Christmas concerts since Christmas is a federally recognized legal holiday.



### CHRISTIAN LAW ASSOCIATION

CLA has served Bible-believing churches and Christians since 1969. If you have encountered legal difficulty for practicing the Biblical faith, please contact our office.



CLA provides free legal services based in part on the generosity of God's people. Your contribution to CLA is 501(c)(3) tax deductible.

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2009 Christmas Edition



DECEMBER 09



Which will you support this shopping season? **+5 TIPS** for sharing true Christmas spirit

# Where's your Christmas Spirit?



## Bringing Back Christmas

The call came in to the Christian Law Association a few weeks before Christmas. It was a pastor on the phone. His daughter worked for a private retail establishment and was told by her manager that no one was permitted to say Merry Christmas to customers. Did the pastor's daughter really have to obey this directive from her boss and not say Merry Christmas?

Unfortunately, the answer is that the pastor's daughter did have to obey her employer, or she could have potentially been terminated.

It is the owner of a private store or business who is legally permitted to decide what sort of image to present to the public and to customers. While this legal principle is very helpful for business owners who want to honor Christmas and its religious message, an anti-Christmas business owner has the same legal right to become a "grinch."

The pastor's daughter was an employee and, therefore, a legal agent of her employer. She was responsible to portray her employer's desired image to the public. As a side note, Christian business owners are legally responsible to accommodate their non-Christian employees who do not celebrate Christmas, even though a non-Christian business owner is not required to allow Christian employees to express their own personal faith to customers.

## The Rest of the Story

Fortunately for our pastor's daughter, that is not the end of the story. While employees are required to obey the instructions of their employers regarding Christmas, the customer is in an entirely different position. If the store

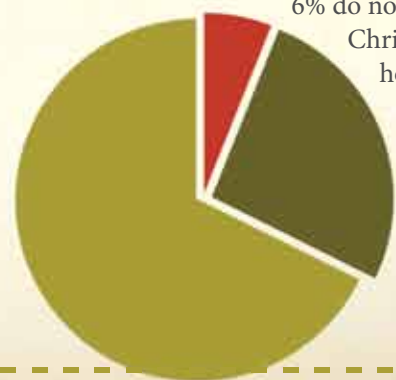
owner is concerned about offending customers and decides it is best not to wish them a Merry Christmas, those customers who want to celebrate Christmas must speak up and let their voices be heard.

Our CLA attorneys told the pastor that he should spread the word about this store's anti-Christmas attitude as far as possible. Any customers who shop in the store should make it clear (politely, of course) to the manager that they are offended by the store's lack of Christmas spirit. They should let the owner or manager know that they intend to shop only in stores and business establishments that properly celebrate the real meaning of Christmas.

Think about it. Christmas is the most profitable time of year for most retail establishments. Why should a store that seems to be ashamed of Christmas get any of your hard-earned holiday shopping dollars? At Christmas time, every Christian in America should let the owners or managers of every store or business they patronize know that they expect to be wished a Merry Christmas and that they intend to shop and to spend their money only at those business establishments that display an appropriate Christmas spirit. That sort of hit to the pocketbook will do more than anything else to change a store owner or manager's mind about wishing customers a Merry Christmas.

## The Positive Approach

A recent Rasmussen poll showed that 64% of Americans celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday, while another 27% celebrate Christmas in a secular manner. Only 6% do not celebrate Christmas at all.



Christmas is an official federal holiday that should be respected even by non-Christians in America.

The separation of church and state does not apply to private business establishments and how they may celebrate or promote religious holidays. That is a decision each business makes for itself depending upon what they think their customers want. If only the "Christmas grinch" let their voices be heard, that is the direction most business owners will go.

In addition to letting your voice be heard when businesses do not wish you a Merry Christmas, you should also make sure to commend those private businesses and stores that display religious symbols of Christmas and greet customers with a "Merry Christmas." Let them know that you appreciate their Christmas spirit and that you intend to reward them with your shopping dollars.

## The Bottom Line



Business establishments, including stores, malls and restaurants are privately owned. Therefore, they are not legally subject to any constitutional restrictions regarding the "separation of church and state." The Establishment Clause does not apply to them. The same is true of private apartment complexes, condominiums, and private clubs. The owners, members, and managers of these private establishments may decide for themselves how to celebrate Christmas. Therefore, a store, club, or condominium could use ONLY religious decorations at Christmas without violating the Constitution or any other laws. Only the government is required to balance religious displays at Christmas with secular items.

Remember that customers have power. When you notice that stores, restaurants, or other business establishments are censoring the religious aspects of Christmas, you should clearly let the owner or manager know that you will not be spending your Christmas dollars there. Most stores and other businesses have stopped Christmas traditions because one or two customers complained. If one or two hundred customers complain when Christmas is not recognized, this trend will very likely change. Christians should not allow a few anti-religious dissidents to completely reorganize our American culture.

## God's Gift to Man



This season, take the time to tell someone about **Salvation**, the greatest gift ever given.

## Other Options

Here are a few other ways that you can bring back Christmas even when others do not share your Christmas spirit.

**1** Consider sending only religious Christmas cards—and tuck an appropriate Gospel tract inside. The only exception would be that if you are a government worker, including a public school teacher, you may not legally give religious Christmas cards or Gospel tracts to clients or students.

**2** Be sure to place a religious Christmas display in your own front yard. Many housing developments or condominiums have rules against signs or displays in yards, but these rules generally do not apply to Christmas decorations.

**3** Consider bringing back the custom of caroling in your community. Singing about the birth of Jesus on the public streets of your town is entirely legal.

**4** While some stores or malls may not display an appropriate Christmas spirit, you are still legally permitted to wear a Christmas T-shirt or holiday button anywhere you shop during Christmas.

**5** Consider leaving an attractive holiday Gospel tract with your tip when eating out during this holiday season.

There are many legal ways that you can help bring back Christmas to your community this year. If Americans do not exercise these liberties while we are still able to do so, there is no guarantee as to how long they will continue.

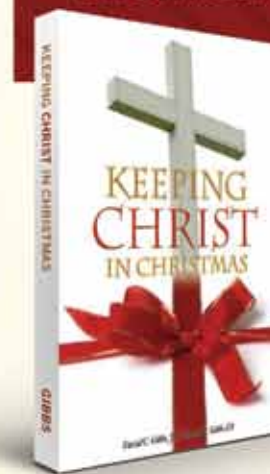


## Franklin on Christmas

While you are celebrating Christmas this year, remember these words of Benjamin Franklin, one of America's Founding Fathers:

"How many observe Christ's birth! How few, his precepts! O! 'Tis easier to keep Holidays than Commandments." *-Poor Richards Almanack, 1743*

Looking for more information on this topic?



Keeping Christ in Christmas

\$15

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The first text message ever transmitted was sent on December 3, 1992, when a British engineer named Neil Papworth sent the words "Merry Christmas" from his computer to a colleague's mobile phone. It is interesting to note that in 2009, a mere 17 years later, **4.1 billion text messages are sent every day in America.**



From Texas:

Thank you to the CLA staff for praying for my daughter as she began college and for sending her a card letting her know you are praying for her. She has kept your postcard attached to her mirror, and she is loving school.

Thank you all so much for your diligent work in protecting my right to preach on the street. Your work has been highly professional and is much appreciated.

From Tennessee:

God bless you all for your endless labors of love. We appreciate your working for our freedoms to worship Christ anywhere.

From Georgia:

I just heard Dr. Gibbs preach on being a Second Mile Christian, and it was life changing. Thank you for helping others to do the work of the Lord.

Thank you to CLA for your faithfulness to God and His people. Our church supports you monthly. Eternity will tell how much this ministry has blessed so many Americans.