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Have we kept Christ the focal point of Christmas?

SCHOOL NEWS

Every year, Christmas shows up with a bang. From stores and homes, to school hallways we find familiar songs, and lights used as decorations. Many people celebrate Christmas, but not everyone celebrates for the right reasons. Depending on a person's worldview, Christmas can have a very different meaning.



Like a child excited for Christmas morning, may I always be eager to receive the gift of your love, O Lord.

Secular 'Christmas'?

Over time, Christmas has become a focus on material things, rather than the celebrating the real and original reason for the holiday. Christmas, seen from a non-religious, broader perspective worldview, is just seen as another holiday that comes with decorations, time with family and friends, food, gifts, and overall a good time. Along with this, there are a few central symbols such as Santa Claus, trees, and lights. The emphasis is giving and spending quality time with loved ones. This is what sin has caused; it has caused us to fall away and lose focus on the real meaning and purpose.



Christmas from a Christian perspective has a much deeper and everlasting meaning. It is much more than gifts and decorations. We as Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, when He came as a humble infant in a manger, with a plan to save all people, which is greater than any other gift we could receive. Christmas is a reminder of God's humility and love, shown through Jesus' birth. So as you reflect back on Christmas remember the main focus and purpose of it.

By: Colleen Olmanson



Humble.



Poor.



For You.

The Importance of Discipline



A year has come and gone, even quicker than last year, or so it seems. 2026 is now upon us and now is the time that people reflect and make New Year's Resolutions and goals for the new year. One study done by Pew Research in 2024 says 30% of Americans make at least one New Year's resolution. Since the United States' population is 340.1 million people, that's roughly 102.03 million people in the United States alone making New Year's resolutions. However, that same study says just one month into the year 13% or 13,263,900 people have already failed to keep their resolutions. That's just in the first month alone. So how does one keep their resolutions and goals?

I think it comes down to one word, discipline. Discipline is self-control in one of its simplest definitions. (It has many, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary.)

Younger people are also more likely to set New Year's resolutions according to the 2024 Pew Research Study. If you want to change your life or accomplish a goal, you need discipline. You can't just write down your goal on a piece of paper, or if we're being realistic in 2026, a note in your phone, and expect it to happen. You need to work towards your goal most every day, as consistency is key. Breaking down your goals into smaller, tangible steps you can take every day is a great way to ensure progress on your goals and resolutions and help you finish by January 1, 2027 if that's your plan. Self-control in the form of discipline is also one of the most attractive qualities in a person. Having self-control makes people around you feel safe, creates stability, shows strength, and helps build trust because people know they can rely on you.

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The Importance of Discipline Continued...

Discipline is also needed in daily life, as God calls us to in both 1 Corinthians 10:31, 'So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it for the glory of God,' and Colossians 3:23-24, 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.' It is the Lord Christ you are serving. We are called to 'commit our work to the Lord' in Proverbs 16:3. If we want to perform our work to the best of our ability and for the Lord as we are commanded to we need discipline.

I think this is especially where my generation struggles because discipline is doing something even if you don't "feel" like it. I think my generation is so addicted to quick dopamine hits that any delay of gratification seems not worthwhile. This outlook leads to laziness, and the vague expressions of "not feeling like doing it" that society receives a lot from teenagers. I think a message we've been told is to do what makes us feel good, instead of what's right and challenging. If we only did what makes us feel "good", we would be serving our flesh not our heavenly Father. Which is why it probably annoys our teachers so much when many of us procrastinate on our assignments and complain about them. We're making a choice to serve our flesh and not doing our work to glorify our Father. In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul talks about the fruits of the Spirit. Under self-control, discipline is listed. Matthew 12:13 tells us that "we will know the tree by its fruit" which basically is saying you can tell what a person believes by their actions or "fruits". If we call ourselves Christians yet we don't show discipline or self-control to accomplish the work set before us, be it school, or actual work in the work place, in a good and God-pleasing way, what are our fruits saying about ourselves?

These passages and thoughts lead us to the inevitable question, how does one build discipline? The Bible tells us that we should "renew our minds" through the Word of God (Romans 12:2, Philippians 4:8). This starts by making small decisions, maybe putting the phone down and doing chores for twenty minutes instead of doom-scrolling. Baby steps like that start building new habits that replace the old ones. Maybe read 10 pages of a non-fiction book instead of going on your phone before bed. Building discipline isn't easy but it is worthwhile. We only have so much time here on earth. God has given us each a different amount and we don't know when that time will run out. Why would we want to waste the one resource we can never ever have back? Time is truly the greatest nonrenewable resource. According to a 2024 study, over half of teens in America spend over four hours on screen time daily. How much could you get done in those four plus hours? *By: Rebecca Heinze Editor in Chief*



Christianity and AI?

As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to revolutionize various aspects of our lives, Christians should question how we are to engage with this technology. AI promises many advances; however, with any powerful tool, our questions should not only address what it can do but also how we are to use it and, more importantly, why we would use it.

AI presents many opportunities as well as challenges, including in the sphere of faith and religion. God has given us the Bible to help guide us here on earth, providing much wisdom about Him and our lives.

First, we should recognize AI is just a tool, not a replacement for God's creation. It is created by humans, and it is imperfect. It should not replace our reliance on God and His Word. We should use AI with wisdom and discernment. AI has no soul, and we should avoid giving it a higher position in our lives.

Humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). One reason the Bible tells us this is to help remind us that we are to use our lives to the full, not take the easy way just to get things done. We are called to be stewards of grace (1 Peter 4:10), which tells us that we are to use our God-given gifts. Using AI as Christians should not replace, but enhance our abilities to serve others and help us live in the way God wants us.

Second, we as Christians are called to reflect Christ. Just as other advancements in our culture have been used for both good and evil, we are called to make decisions that reflect the character of Christ—love, justice, and mercy. This means we should use any information from AI, as well as other sources, with caution, not wanting to damage our faith and our love for God. We know all too well that blessings can become distractions from the work set out for us to do! Even good tools can be corrupted by humanity and sin!

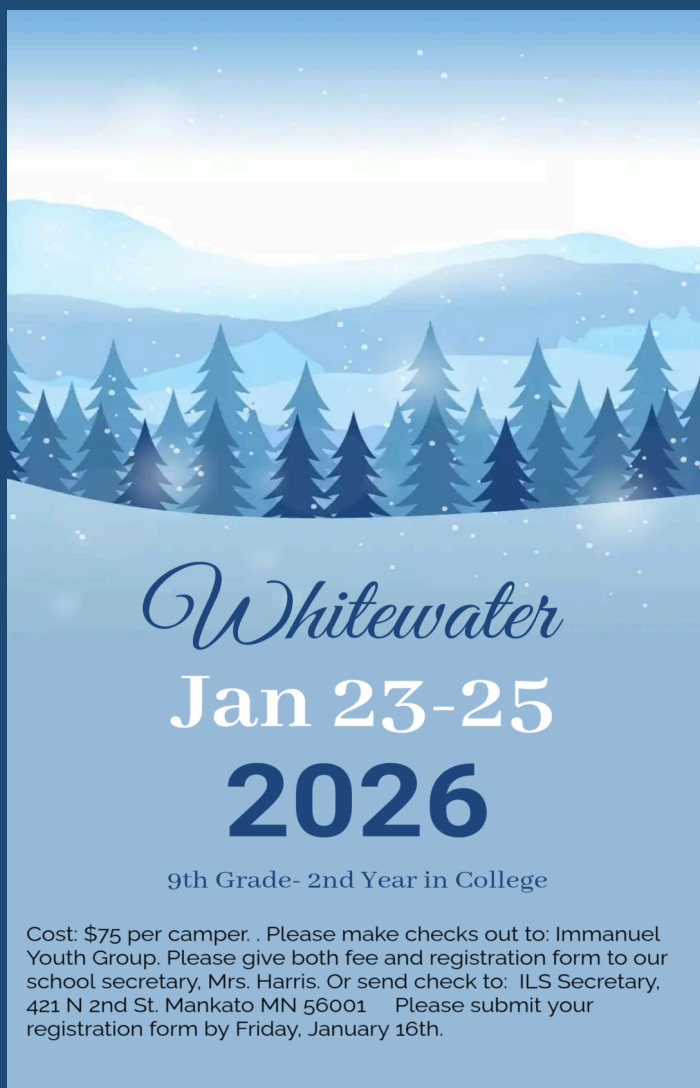
Third, human creativity comes from God, not from man. As we know, God created each one of us in our own unique way to do all things to the glory of Him. AI can help develop our skills of producing art, writing, creating music, and many more things. We can also use AI to refine our works, but shouldn't rely on it to create something we call our own. As we engage with AI, we must avoid the temptation to use it in vain, running from anything that tempts us toward evil in our thoughts, words and actions.

Finally, we are called by Christ to build others up, leading them to Christ. Although many of the technologies we use today are helpful, we should be cautious when using them to lead others to Christ, knowing that errors are possible and that we should examine our words carefully to not lead them astray.

AI presents many benefits as well as challenges. When we use it, we should engage with it thoughtfully, acknowledging and correcting errors, to the best of our ability. *By: Lucy Stratton*



Student Corner



Whitewater
Jan 23-25
2026

9th Grade- 2nd Year in College

Cost: \$75 per camper. . Please make checks out to: Immanuel Youth Group. Please give both fee and registration form to our school secretary, Mrs. Harris. Or send check to: ILS Secretary, 421 N 2nd St. Mankato MN 56001 Please submit your registration form by Friday, January 16th.



IMMANUEL WOMEN WHO HIKE

HIKING EVENT

Nerstrand State Park

JOIN US FOR HIKING, FELLOWSHIP & FUN!
 WE WILL MEET AT CHURCH AND CAR POOL OR CARAVAN TO THE PARK!

Sunday, February 8 @ 12:30pm

ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS CAN BE DIRECTED TO HILARY LIEN

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Senior Spotlight: William Lien



Our senior in the spotlight this month is William Lien. William has been attending Immanuel for his entire academic career! All the way from kindergarten to his final year of high school. He is also a member of Immanuel Church and serves in a variety of ways in both areas. William is the second of six children and resides in North Mankato. William has been working at Dairy Queen for almost four years and enjoys the freedom that those finances provide him. In a brief interview with William we were able to discuss a wide variety of topics and I was able to pick his brain about a few things from his time here among us at ILHS. I asked William what sort of influence his peers had on him over the last 13 years and he said, *'Everyone I have interacted with at ILHS has been an influence to some degree. When you have a smaller school you are bound to get to know everyone pretty well! I would say that the majority of my peers have been positive influences in my life.'* I asked him what he was the most excited for as he looks to graduation, *"I am the most excited to be at BLC (Bethany Lutheran College) full time next year."* When I moved on to ask him what he would tell his freshmen self he had this to say, *'Stay on task and don't get so easily sidetracked.'* To finish up the interview I asked William what made ILHS unique from other high schools. He had this to say, *'Our teachers here are very connected with the student body. They really get to know and care about you. It makes sense because they are concerned with your eternal life even more than your physical one.'* William has been a blessing here at Immanuel. We will miss you next year!

Senior Bucket List



As most of my classmates and I can say, graduation used to feel like forever away. As freshmen, we had so many plans and ideas for our high school experience and what would come after graduation, but before we had realized it, high school had slipped by just like that, and now, with one semester remaining of high school, I asked my classmates what are some of their bucket list items before our high school career comes to a close. Knowing my class, you can guess the first responses I got for this question were very 'unserious', but digging a little deeper, here is what I got.

- #1 "to finish all my school work in order to graduate"
- #2 have a "baller" senior class trip, and from what is in the works right now, it will be exactly that.
- #3 "Be bossed up at banquet." Aside from those being our main three goals, here are some more individual bucket list

items. "Win the lottery" - Jeremy Hanel "Visit Iowa" - Cade Libby. My personal goals are to pass my written exam for flight training and to achieve my Mitchell award in the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Cadet Programs, so I can join the Air Force with a higher pay grade. What you should take out of this article, though, is to cherish the time you have left here, because as we have learned, it goes by fast, and you won't get this time back to spend time with your friends every day, participate in sports, drama, etc. I would recommend is making a bucket list of your own to complete before high school is over, because before you know it will be right around the corner. *By: Leah Dick*