

THE  
BEST  
CHRISTMAS  
EVER!



WILLIAM TAYLOR

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A few years ago, my wife and I were at a Christmas party where she got chatting to a man she found really interesting. We had decided before the event not to talk to people about what they did as a job. So often conversations start like that, and we thought we'd try to be a little more original. However, as she continued speaking to this guy, she grew more and more intrigued. Eventually, she couldn't help herself: 'I hope you don't mind me asking, but what do you do for work?'

He answered, 'I'm in film work.'

'Oh,' she said, 'do you make commercials, or are you into something more serious?'

'I make films,' he replied. You can guess where this is going, I'm sure! Janet asked,

‘Might I ever have seen any of the stuff you’ve made?’

‘Well,’ he replied patiently, ‘have you ever watched *Four Weddings and a Funeral*?’ The man was Richard Curtis CBE one of Britain’s most famous and successful comedy writers, best known for *Notting Hill*, *Bridget Jones*, *Love Actually*, *Blackadder*, *Mr Bean* and *The Vicar of Dibley* – as well as *Four Weddings and a Funeral*! You can imagine my wife’s embarrassment. She had missed completely the significance of the person who was stood in front of her. She says that the conversation slightly dried up after that!

It is possible to have been celebrating Christmas for years and years but never quite to have realised the significance of what Christmas is really about. We grow familiar with the carols, the decorations, the parties and the presents, and even with the baby in the manger, but it is all too easy to miss the

staggering reality of the person at the centre of it all.

One of the events that signals to many people that Christmas is really upon us is the carol service from King's College Chapel, Cambridge. It is broadcast to literally millions all over the world. Our family often listens to it while we make brandy butter and ice the Christmas cake on Christmas Eve. The most famous reading in that broadcast has a sentence that sums up brilliantly what Christmas is really all about:

*Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (John 1:12–13).*

THE  
GLORIOUS  
OFFER OF  
CHRISTMAS





The ‘him’ in that Bible reading refers to Jesus. To ‘receive’ Jesus is to recognise that he is God and to submit to his rule. So those who receive Jesus are being offered the absolute certainty of ‘the right to become children of God’ (verse 12). The word ‘right’ in the original language in which this was written speaks of an absolute legal authority. It is used both in legal and in military settings.

Like most families, we have a special drawer in our home where we keep all the legal documents that we need. My birth certificate lives there. It tells me that I was born to parents, Edward and Caroline, in a place which I am not going to disclose because it forms the basis for so many security questions, and on