

And he faced up to and defeated the ultimate enemy we all face: death. He showed that God doesn't just sympathise with us in our weakness and frailty, but has entered our world to do something about it—to bring us back to himself.

Right in the middle of the picture is Jesus Christ—suffering and dying on a cross. God sent his Son to bring a broken world back to himself. Jesus died on a cross, so that we could find forgiveness for our sins and peace with God.

Jesus' death—his blood—is the way that we can be restored to friendship with God in this life. And Jesus rose to life again on the third day after he died. So his new life is the way we can enjoy eternal life with God for ever.

The completed picture

The picture is only complete and makes sense when we put ourselves in the right place. We are not the centre of the world: *Jesus is*. Our place is to humbly accept what God has done for us in Christ. We must come to the baby and worship him as our God. We must come to the cross and receive the forgiveness he offers. And we must come to the risen Jesus, and be filled with the new life he gives to those who follow him.

Will you get the pieces in the right place this Christmas?



A Christmas prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

thank you that you show the truth about God, the world and about my own life.

I'm sorry for the way I have ignored you and pushed you out of your rightful place in the centre of my life.

Thank you that you loved me enough to enter our world to show us the truth about God.

Thank you that you loved me enough to die so I can find peace with God.

Thank you that you rose again to give me new life for ever.

Please help me to receive these gifts this Christmas time.

Amen

If you would like to find out more about what it means to be a Christian, please contact the church or person who gave you this leaflet, or visit:
www.christianityexplored.org

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Life is a puzzle. Like a confusing jumble of jigsaw pieces emptied out on a table, we wonder how we can start to make sense of it.

Some of the pieces make us smile—pictures of friends and family; the wonderful holidays we've been on; fantastic food; and exciting plans for the future.

Some pieces are slightly less exciting—the place where we work perhaps; school homework; that time spent stuck in traffic.

Other pieces of life's jigsaw are darker—the bits we wish were not there. Broken relationships; personal failures; shattered hopes; people we knew and loved, but who are now gone.

Looking at this untidy heap, we wonder: How is it possible that they are part of the same picture? How could they ever be put together into something that makes sense? If only there was a picture that would help us know what bits fit where...

The picture on the box

And there is. God sees everything, and understands your life completely. It's only when we see the world and our own lives from his point of view that we can start to piece together what our lives really mean. And God has sent a "picture" into the world that is our only hope for understanding what the point of it all is.



We find that picture not *on* a jigsaw box, but *in* a box filled with hay—because God's picture is not a painting, or a book or a photograph. *It's a person:* God's Son, Jesus, who was born on that first Christmas Day, and placed in a manger—a hay box used for feeding animals.

The image of God

The good news of Christmas is that all our guessing games about God and the meaning of life are over. That's because Jesus came, not just to teach us about God, but to show us what God is truly like. As one Bible writer put it:

No one can see God, but Jesus Christ is exactly like him.. He ranks higher than everything that has been made. Through his power all things were made—things in heaven and on earth, things seen and unseen... *The Bible, Colossians 1 v 15-16*

In other words, when we look at Jesus Christ, we are looking at God made visible.

It's hard to imagine that the baby in the manger we celebrate at Christmas is actually God. A squealing, helpless baby... who created the universe! And yet, everything that he did and said pointed to this being true. Even street-wise working men who spent time with him were convinced.

The baby grew to be a travelling preacher who was adored and followed by thousands—so eager were they to hear his thrilling words that clearly



answered the big questions of life. He taught about a loving Father God who knows each one of us intimately. A Father who treasures those he has made. A Father who weeps over our spoiled world, with all its suffering and injustice. A Father who will not let such sin and evil go unpunished.

Why would the Creator of everything choose to be born as a weak, helpless child—at the mercy of disease, war, and a homicidal king called Herod?

The central piece

When we try to build our lives with ourselves in the centre, we inevitably fail. Like trying to put together a jigsaw by following the wrong picture. We find that it just doesn't work. And even if we muddle along, and work out how to live and enjoy life, death still waits for us at the end. We have pushed God out of his rightful place at the centre of our lives, and face the consequences of that both now and for all eternity. But...

Through Christ, God has brought all things back to himself again—things on earth and things in heaven. God made peace through the blood of Christ's death on the cross. *The Bible, Colossians 1 v 20*

Jesus didn't just offer words of understanding. He showed us the powerful rescuing love of God. He cured people of painful illness; freed people from the slavery of guilt and sin, and the dark forces at work in our world.