



Archbishop Stephen joined Zoe Ball in the BBC Radio 2 studio to share a Pause for Thought. You can read it in full [here](#).

A priest I know recently told me about a young couple who had been married in her church a few years earlier, and came to a Christingle service proudly carrying their newborn baby.

When the service finished and everyone else had piled into the hall for mince pies and a glass of something lovely, warming and mulled, the family lingered by the crib.

It was a large crib and after standing for a while gazing at the Christmas scene, they approached one of the churchwardens and tentatively asked whether it would be alright if they put their baby in the crib and took a photo of him.

Ok, so it may be that in our TikTok, Instagram-ready world nothing is real unless you get the photo – with the right filters, of course. Or it might be something else: that the Christmas story is so compelling, so beautiful, so ‘other worldly’ and yet, at the same time, astonishingly ‘this-worldly’, God come down to earth, that we want to get inside it. These parents, and their little child longing to be part of something bigger. To find values beyond themselves. To hope for something more than money or time.

Or did it spring from that very human instinct just to say thank you to God, whether you have much faith or not, for those things in life which are most precious, most deeply human, like a child, like a moment?

Well, I like to think so.

And I like this story, because it reminds me that the only way to understand the Christmas story is to get inside it. But the bigger and more sensible and more grown-up you get, the harder this is.

We may lose the sense of wonder that draws us to the crib.

We may lose the smallness, like the baby, that might mean we cannot be put there.

We may be beguiled and seduced by the world’s bright lights. And, then we look the other way when God comes knocking.

But there are lots of opportunities to get inside the story. At a church near you. We need to choose to take them.

'Step into Christmas', as Sir Elton John put it.



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