**AIM HIGHER**

**The True Essence of Christmas by Gabriel Osu (2012)**

*Read through the extracts below taken from Osu’s article carefully and highlight anything that could relate to the significance and power of the Christmas spirit.*

WE are in that special season once again, a season of joy, of peace, of great tidings. A season when we celebrate the birth of Christ the King, the redeemer of mankind! Jesus is the reason for the season.

What does Christmas mean to you and me? I will like to draw reference from the views of two writers. The first is J. C Penney who wrote, ‘Christmas is not just a time for festivity and merry making. It is more than that. It is a time for the contemplation of eternal things. The Christmas spirit is a spirit of giving and forgiving.’ Next is the thought provoking words of George F. McDougall ‘Christmas means a spirit of love, a time when the love of God and the love of our fellow men should prevail over all hatred and bitterness, a time when our thoughts and deeds and the spirit of our lives manifest the presence of God.

The above comments say it all. Christmas is not all about merry making. We must also spare time to reflect on the essence of the period which is the love of God for humanity. This unquantifiable love is summed up in the popular bible verse John 3: 16 “For God so loved the world that he gave us his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him will not perish but have eternal life. ”When we ponder on God’s love for us, we too are encouraged to share love with others, to embrace peace and be our brother’s keeper. When we are imbued with this love of God, we will be always willing to give a helping hand to those in need, to give succour and comfort to the vulnerable ones amongst others.

At Christmas, we are expected to spare time to contemplate on things eternal. That is, we must remind ourselves that we are strangers her on earth; that our real home is in heaven. And that no matter how long we live, we shall sure die one day. So many people who started the year 2012 with us are not around to finish it. Like us, they commenced the New Year with high hopes and aspirations. Some may have planned to marry this year, to buy a new car or to move into their new apartment. But alas, all those are now but a pipe dream. Thus, we should count ourselves lucky to be alive to see this Christmas. This should therefore be a period of gratitude to God for sparing our lives and counting us among the living. It should equally be an opportunity for us to mend our ways with God so that we will not be found wanting.

The spirit behind Christmas is that of giving and sharing.

**AIM HIGHER (In your own words)**

1. According to Osu, what is the true meaning behind the Christmas season and spirit?

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2. How do Osu’s ideas relate to those expressed by Fred in Stave 1?

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3. Though Dickens never explicitly references religion at this point, to what extent is Fred a symbol of Christianity?

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