

# The Ultimate Christmas Tree

"I will put the cedar in the wilderness, the acacia and the myrtle and the olive tree; I will place the juniper in the desert together with the box tree and the cypress. ~ Isaiah 41:19

Over the years we have placed and decorated many Christmas trees. Some tall and elegant, some sort and sweet, some living cedars or fir or pines and some artificial. When all are put together from childhood to the latest stages of being an adult, they form a beautiful picture together which points to the ultimate Christmas tree.

The ultimate Christmas tree is one that can go with us no matter where we are. It changes and remains the same each year. It never fades or dries out. It is always fresh, always beautiful.

The tree I speak of is decorated with the faces of family and friends that we come to know over the years. It includes our own family tree, but expands to fill the branches with new family members. If we put all the friends that we have met on that tree, it becomes a beautiful picture of wonder and loveliness.

Think of the special people that God has blessed you with in this Christmas season and decorate your imaginary, ultimate tree with real and lovely people. We can have several trees if we want. One with our nuclear family, one with wider family, one with our family tree, one with all of our friends, and one with very special friends.

It's your own special tree. No one is just like it. It is a blessing to you as you give thanks for all those people during the Christmas season.

This can also be a mnemonic to help catalogue our blessings, and to combat bad feelings which may come our way in this busy time of year. Sitting at our desk, driving down the road, or meditating in silence on the people we are fortunate to travel with on this journey of life can lift us up, make us smile, certainly prompt us to give thanks for each and every one.

They encircle the tree as ornaments as they encircle us at the same time, giving peace, safety, love, and joy. This is part of what makes this the ultimate Christmas tree.

But when we add the divine part, it becomes spectacular. The same heavenly light that shone over the shepherds at that first Christmas, the glory of God, illuminates that tree like no other. It shines with a quiet glow when we need it, and shines so brightly we can see no danger or darkness when we need it as well.

God is all around us, his arms wrapping us in love and eternity, as we realize that the evergreen of that tree will never die, and neither shall we. We place ornaments of shepherds and angels, sheep and donkeys, manger scenes and wise men on that tree. Jesus in the manger looks up at Mary and Joseph, and the tree of life takes on new meaning.

In reflection and joy, we can think of that tree as ourselves, with all the lovely people who make it wonderful hanging on the lovely branches. We can give thanks for Jesus who hung on the tree of Calvary to save us.

It never gets crowded. There is room for every person we want to place there. God makes infinite room for the people we know and love and interact with, and whether we see them often or not at all or every day, they still belong there.

Think of a friend from grammar school or college or work from a long time ago and place them on your tree. Build it with special family members. Complete it with God's special anointing, a light which comes from heaven and makes all things right.

Maybe then, dear reader, we can then be like the tree the Psalmist describes when he says, "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers. How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night." ~Psalm 1:1-3

Through that tree, elsewhere described as the shoot of Jesse who is Jesus the Savior, God brings water to the desert, blessings to the land, light to the life. As you reflect on your tree, do not hesitate to begin decorating and being blessed. This tree can go with you wherever you are, and always has the right ornaments and lights. It, like you, can be a blessing to others this Christmas, and all year round!