



THE  
" *Stuff* "  
OF  
CHRISTMAS

A daily Christmas devotional guide  
December 1-26



*freedom*  
CHURCH

# Intro



**Toys, trees, and tinsel. Rudolph, Ralphie, red and green. Santa Clause, candy canes, and candles. Mistletoe, mittens, movies and more. Christmas comes with a lot of...stuff.**

**This Christmas season we will take another look at the “stuff” of Christmas. If you’re excited by the extras or annoyed by the excess, we’ll discover the deeper meaning behind it all.**

**Whether you’re more familiar with “The Christmas Story” according to St. Luke or “A Christmas Story” according to Ralphie, you can discover something new this Christmas by taking time to look at the**

**"stuff."**



# How to Use this Guide



**Welcome to our 2023 Christmas Devotional guide. Over the next 25 days, you'll read a simple passage about the “stuff” of Christmas--everything from movies to mistletoe and gifts to the Grinch. This will be followed by a short passage of scripture. All in all it should take less than 5 minutes, and can be a great way for the whole family to start each day this Christmas season.**

*--Pastors Oliver & Emily*



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# Dec 1



## Cards

**Communicating at Christmas is a big deal. Annually over 2 billion dollars is spent on Christmas cards, not to mention the video messages, e-cards, and annual newsletters. The next time you send or receive a holiday message, let it remind you of the fact that you can communicate with God through prayer.**

*"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done."*

*--Philippians 4:6*

# Dec 2



# Doves

**Doves are a symbol of peace and of the Holy Spirit. When you see a dove, let it remind you of the peace that Jesus came to bring at Christmas and the peace that can live in you through his Holy Spirit.**

*"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."* --Luke 2:14

# Dec 3



## Sticks and Coal

Many of us remember hearing as children that, if we were on the naughty list, a stick or lump of coal is all that Santa would leave for us. To a certain degree, the message of the gospel is that we deserve something far worse than a lump of coal, but instead Jesus offers us something much better--eternal life. And not because we made a nice list, but because he is so good.

(scripture on next page)



# Sticks and Coal

(continued)

*"Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. But— When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life."*

*--Titus 3:3-7*

*Dec 3*



Dec 4



# Ornaments

The tradition of hanging glass bulbs on trees supposedly began when a German glassblower couldn't afford the typical decoration of fruit to put on his tree, so he made his own. These glass ornaments will show your reflection when you stand in front of it. Let this be a reminder to reflect Jesus in all that you do.

*"...see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image."--2 Corinthians 3:18*

Dec 5



# Candy Canes

It's the same shape as the shepherd's staff. Turned upside down, it's the same as the letter J for Jesus. The candy cane can remind us in many ways of the Savior by whose stripes we are healed.

*"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."-Isaiah 53:5 NKJV*

# Dec 6



# Santa

December 6th is *St. Nicholas Day*. The character of Santa Clause is partially based off Nicholas of Myra, who was a 3rd century Christian Bishop. He lived his life with devotion to God and others. Nicholas' spirit and generosity is something that each of us can emulate this Christmas.

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up."--Hebrews 12:1*

# Dec 7



## Villages

**For many families, one of their most prized Christmas decorations is the ceramic Christmas village. This village can remind us of the "village" we all need. This connection and community can be found through the Church.**

*"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another..."--Hebrews 10:25-26*

# Dec 8



# Holly

**"Deck the halls with boughs of holly!"**

**There are many legends tying the use of holly at Christmastime to Jesus. One says that the cross Jesus was crucified on was made of wood from a holly tree and the red berries were originally white, but turned red afterwards to symbolize the shed blood of Jesus. Whether this happened or not, let seeing boughs of holly this Christmas remind you of a Savior who changes things. (Scripture on next page)**



# Holly

(continued)

*"You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross."*

*--Colossians 2:13-15*

Dec 8

# Dec 9



## Snowflakes

**A cubic foot of snow can contain up to 1 billion snowflakes, and each of these will be a unique shape. Whether we have a white Christmas this year or not, let snowflakes remind you of the way God has also uniquely made you.**

*"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous"--Psalm 139:13-14*

# Dec 10



## Movies

From timeless classics, like *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Rudolph*, to more modern fare like *Elf* or, even cheesy *Hallmark* specials... movies are one of the most enjoyable parts of Christmas. We can watch the same one every year and enjoy it just as much each year. The story of the first Christmas is also worth visiting time and time again.

*"This is how Jesus the Messiah was born..."*

*--Matthew 1:18*



# Dec 11



## Tinsel

There's a legend that when Joseph, Mary, and Jesus fled to Egypt they stopped for the night in a cave. While there, a spider came upon the Christ child and was so overcome it spun a magnificent web over the entrance of the cave to keep the family warm. When soldiers came searching, they didn't bother going into the cave in which the Holy family was sleeping, because of the web. The tradition of glistening tinsel is said to represent this spider's web.

(scripture on next page)



# Tinsel

(continued)

*"After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother,"--Matthew 2:13-14*

Dec 11

# Dec 12



# Poinsettia

Today is National Poinsettia Day, honoring the plant's namesake John Poinsett, the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico and a botanist who began importing the plants to the United States. Legend has it that in the 16th century a poor girl in Mexico collected weeds to put in front of a nativity scene because it's all she could afford. From the pile of yard waste, a poinsettia bloomed. This story can remind us of God's ability to take anything and use it for his purposes. (scripture on next page)



# Poinsettia

(continued)

*"...he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the Lord has planted for his own glory."*

*--Isaiah 61:3*

Dec 12

# Dec 13



## The Grinch

Dr. Seuss' *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* quickly became a staple of Christmas after its publication in 1957. The Grinch's climactic realization that Christmas, "doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!," points to the life Jesus came to bring that first Christmas.

*"I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of."--Jesus, John 10:10 MSG*

# Dec 14



## Pickles

**A lesser known tradition is the Christmas Pickle. Some families will decorate their tree with a glass pickle ornament. The first child to spot the pickle on Christmas morning receives an extra gift. In the same way this Christmas, we can commit to search out all that God has for us.**

*"Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures."--Proverbs 2:3-4*

# Dec 15



# Angels

Whether atop a tree or in the songs we sing, angels at Christmas remind us of the original announcement of Jesus' birth and our mission to keep sharing the good news.

*"Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.'"--Luke 2:13-14*

# Dec 16

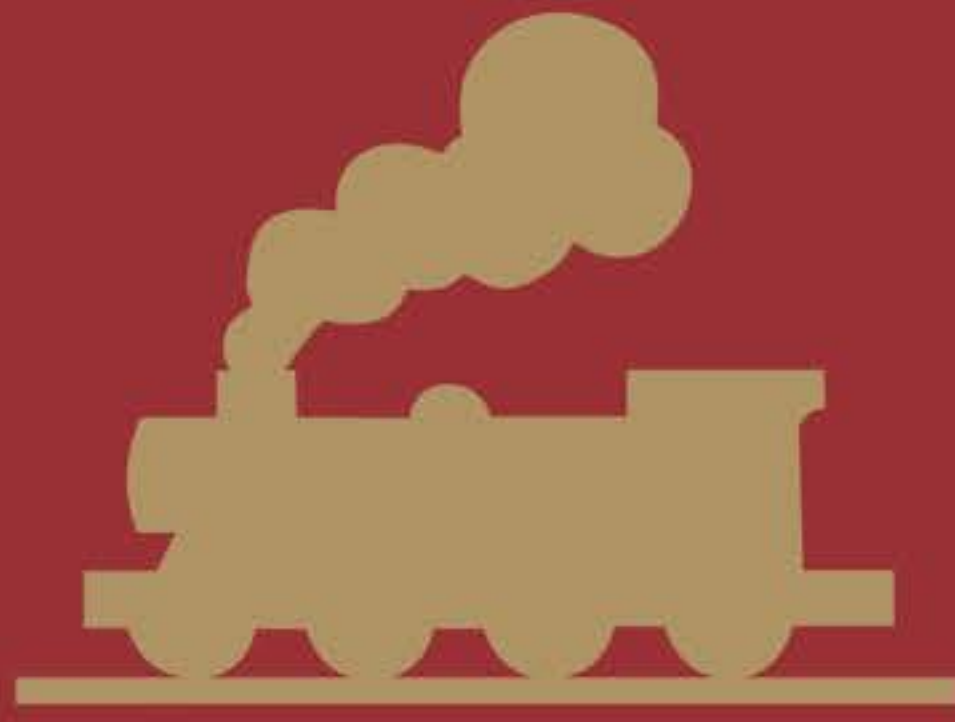


# Trains

**Today we decorate with model trains for Christmas. In a bygone era, trains were integral to Christmas because it was the way people traveled to see family and had goods and gifts transported from one location to the next. People relied on trains' dependability to make Christmas happen. This Christmas, remember the one we can depend on and who will never fail to show up on time.**

**(continued on next page)**





# Trains

(continued)

*"And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus."--Philippians 4:19*

Dec 16

# Dec 17



## Ugly Sweaters

Originally, it was about digging something outdated from the closet for fun, but today they are bought new and specially designed to be tacky and ugly. It's a weird tradition, but it can remind us that Christmas happened, in part, because of the ugliness of the world. Jesus came to shine a light in the midst of darkness, brokenness, and sin.

*"The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world."*--

*John 1:9*

# Dec 18



## Gifts

Gift giving is inspired by the original gifts from the wisemen: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. This favorite tradition can also remind us that, ultimately, the first gift of Christmas was Jesus coming to earth and giving of himself.

*"Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!"--2 Corinthians 9:15*

# Dec 19



## Trees

Christmas trees have many symbolic meanings, such as the evergreen and eternal nature of God's love. But most pointedly, a Christmas tree can remind us of the tree that Jesus hung on for us.

*"But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing.*

*(continued on next page)*



# Trees

(continued)

*For it is written in the Scriptures, 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.' Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith."-Galatians 3:13-14*

Dec 19

# Dec 20



## Carols

*Joy to the World, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, O Come All Ye Faithful..what would Christmas be without music? One of the original songs of Christmas was a song that Mary sang after learning she was expecting Jesus. Traditionally, it has been known as the *Magnificat*. Read it below.*

*"And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant..."*

**(continued on next page)**



# Carols

(continued)

*From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.'”*

*-Luke 2:46-55*

*Dec 20*

# Dec 21



# Stars

**Stars on tops of trees and in light displays remind us of the first Christmas star that guided the Wisemen to Jesus. When we see stars this Christmas, let them be an encouragement to us on our own journeys.**

*"The star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!"--Matthew 2:9-10*



# Dec 22



## Mistletoe

**Mistletoe may be one of the more confusing holiday traditions there is--a plant with poisonous berries mixed with kissing. But mistletoe can remind us of the love that we can share this Christmas. A love not limited to location, but one that Jesus came to this earth to share with all.**

**(scripture on next page)**



# Mistletoe

(continued)

*"God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.--1 John 4:9-12*

Dec 22

# Dec 23



# Travel

**"Over the river and through the woods..."**  
For many of us the holidays include travel. As you travel, be reminded of the "travel" of Jesus. He stepped away from his heavenly throne and came to this earth.

*"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.*  
(continued on next page)



# Travel

(continued)

*When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.--Philippians 2:5-11*

Dec 23

# Dec 24



## Candles

Lighting a candle in one's window is commonplace at Christmastime.

Originally, lighting a candle in the window was an act of rebellion. Some Christians were forced to go "underground", so they would light candles in their windows to let others know they were Christians and invite them into their homes. Let this be a reminder to shine your light this Christmas no matter the circumstance.

(scripture on next page)



# Candles

(continued)

*“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket.*

*Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”--Matthew 5:14-16*

Dec 24

# Dec 25



## Wreaths

**Do you have a wreath on your door?**

**Originally, families would make their own wreaths after trimming the trees to its desired shape. The shape of the wreath was also important as the circle symbolized the eternal life Jesus came to bring at Christmas.**

*“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”--John 3:16*

# Dec 26



# Bells

**Bells have long been associated with Christmas because bells are used to help make announcements. As we end this journey through the "stuff" of Christmas, you can live as a bell by announcing the message of Christmas that Jesus has come.**

*"After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished,"--Luke 2:17-18*



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