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BIG VIEW SMALL WINDOW

Monthly Newsletter



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"HAPPY HOLIDAYS" OR "MERRY CHRISTMAS"?

I remember walking into retail stores and eating in restaurants where I heard real Christmas music this time of year. Of course, everyone suffered through Mariah Carey's "All I Want For Christmas" and those boy band holiday reunion LPs. But in between that mess there were legit Jesus, Mary and Joseph lyrics that set a warm atmosphere.

Around the same time I noticed the more religious tunes being replaced by pop-stars, greeting someone with "Merry Christmas" also became a social-cultural flashpoint.

On Dec. 17, 2017, History.com wrote an article titled "The War of Words behind 'Happy Holidays': Seasonal greetings have never been so controversial."

The article cited a 2016 poll conducted by the Public Research Institute which said, "66 percent of Democrats said that stores and businesses should greet customers with 'Happy Holidays', 'Season's Greetings' or some other general greeting rather than 'Merry Christmas' as a show of respect for different religious faiths; only 28 percent of Republicans felt the same."

Leave it to political nutjobs and social rejects to ruin a good thing.

According to History, the real controversy came about in 2005 when President George W. Bush left "Christmas" out of his White House holiday card. Prior to that the word was last used by his father H.W. in 1992. For those easily triggered and those who pride themselves on being politically correct, "Christmas" and "holiday" are readily exchanged.

History also said, "'Merry Christmas' and 'Happy Holidays' have religious roots. Christmas comes from 'Cristes Maesse', or the Mass of Christ, the first usage [in A.D. 1038] described the mass held to commemorate Christ's birth. As for 'holiday,' the word emerged in the 1500s as a replacement for the earlier medieval word 'haliday,' which itself had supplanted the Old English 'haligdaeg,' meaning holy day."

Those with a Jewish heritage can celebrate Hanukkah, those who are woke on Black culture will celebrate Kwanzaa and the non-religious celebrate a Hallmark Christmas. If the point is to disassociate oneself from Jesus Christ, there are plenty of secular options. Only those looking for a fight will be offended in the end.

If you travel to another country, the natives will know you're an American when you make eye contact, smile and extend your right hand to greet them. When you want to be diplomatic and conscientious this time of year, you can use "Happy Holidays." If you want to let the world know you believe Jesus is the reason for the season, then just say, "Merry Christmas!"

(Add a "God is good!" if the person is a real Scrooge!)

Source: <https://www.history.com/news/the-war-of-words-behind-happy-holidays>

Luke Chapter 2

CHRISTMAS EVE, A.D. 2021



Joseph stopped in front of the Marksman Lodge and turned to Mary with a coy smile. He noticed the facility and grounds were shabbier than the pictures...a couple of boarded windows, a few missing white picket fencing posts and no concierge to greet them. Still, he figured it was better than sleeping in a barn.

"Joe, have you lost your mind?"

"What?"

"I'm not staying in a gun range motel."

"Why not? The rooms are sound proof, the beds are huge, and there's all-you-can-eat steak and egg on the breakfast bar every morning. I know you'd like that."

She glared at him through narrow slits, clinching both fists.

"I'm just saying, I know you're hungry...a lot," he chuckled nervously. "You know, because of the baby..." *I still don't see how God supposedly did that*, he thought.

"Let's just keep driving east," she sighed. "There's bound to be a decent place along this highway."

"We're already in the middle of nowhere, Mary," he whined, pleading with his eyes.

"If you want to stay here, go-head. I'll drive myself to the nearest town."

A tap on the driver-side window interrupted what was sure to be another heated debate. Joseph quickly turned the crank to lower the window.

These could have been power windows if she would've let me upgrade. Cheap car, cheap dinners, cheap vacations, cheap everything, all for this miraculous bundle of joy...

"Yes, hi," Joseph greeted the man with a squinty smile.

The streetlights were too dim to make out more than broad shoulders, a full beard and trapper hat.

"If you're looking to stay at the Marksman, there aren't any vacancies this time of year," the man grunted.

Mary delivered a solid right jab to Joseph's shoulder. "I thought you said you called ahead," she hissed.

"I...I saw the billboard as we were leaving the city," he explained, rubbing the sting from his arm.

"I got a place you can stay," the man offered. "Looks like you're going to need to put your feet up," he gestured to Mary.

"Oh," she massaged her full belly. "No thanks, we'll keep driving."

"Next lodge is about two hours out and you'll be traveling into the eye of that winter storm headed this way."

"We'll take whatever you have available," Joseph declared. He offered Mary his best smile as she fixed him with a blazing stare.

...And that is how silent night was born.

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Do You Still Believe In Santa?

Polar Express has been in my holiday movie line up for several years now. It's part dream, part ghost story, part everything a kid could wish for on Christmas. Who wouldn't enjoy a crazy, dangerous train ride to the North Pole!?

Most people above a certain age know it's silly to believe in a jolly fat guy who laughs, "Ho! Ho! Ho!" But surprisingly, some adults say imagination is what keeps them young!

A 2013 survey reportedly showed nearly one in six adults still write to Santa every year and nearly a third of adults from 18-55 still hang stockings. This is more of a traditions based belief, not a sincere belief based in reality.

Source: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/weird-news/adults-believe-santa-one-six-2867973>

The Legend of St. Nicholas: The Real Santa Claus

- He was believed to be born around 280 A.D. in modern-day Turkey
- He gave away all his inherited wealth and traveled the countryside helping the poor and sick
- He was the most popular saint in Europe during the Renaissance period
- An honorary feast is celebrated on the anniversary of his death, Dec. 6

Source:

https://www.history.com/topics/chrmas/santa-claus#section_2



- Should parents encourage children to believe in Santa Claus?
- Is there any harm in believing he exists?
- Do children struggle to transition away from belief in Santa Claus as they mature?
- Does having this belief put added stress on parents to meet their kids' expectations every year?
- Does belief in Santa Claus compete with faith in God?

Answering these questions from an emotional and psychological standpoint, it's unwise to condition children to make wish lists, to go along with a performance based relationship, and expect material things from an invisible man. Do you see how this could cause character issues over time?

Expecting something for nothing produces latent tendencies for "holiday blues." When we're trained to "be good all year", hoping to see a miracle that only happens once a year, there's bound to be perpetual disappointment. By the time we're adults, throwing a fit when we don't get a certain toy becomes an attitude of entitlement when we don't find a mate or make enough money to buy that thing we wanted.

Nevertheless, there's no harm in asking "What do you want Santa to bring you this year?" or taking a trip to see Santa at the mall. It's kind of like having ice cream and cake for breakfast - don't do it often, but enjoy it when you do!

Breaking Tradition

2008 was the first time I spent Christmas with strangers. I was a member at a new church and Beverly, the church secretary, invited me to spend the day with her family.

When we all gathered in the dining room to pray over the meal, I remember everyone erupting with deep sighs and reverent chants as they gave thanks to Saints. My eyes popped open and Beverly winked at me with a smile. Consequently, this was also my first Christmas with Catholic believers.

Beverly and her tribe were kind and welcoming and, from what I remember, the food was good. I was gifted with a copy of Michael W. Smith's *A New Hallelujah* and I still have it in my possession 13 years later.

Breaking holiday traditions required that I find a new definition of *family*.





During my childhood, there was a time of Christmas Eve make-believe but the magic didn't last long. I think I stopped believing in Santa Claus soon after my mom died. This tragedy was immediately followed by the abrupt entry of a mentally disturbed step-mother. So, I faked once-a-year "warm fuzzies" for a couple of decades until I decided I couldn't do it anymore.

I am not a total Grinch but I admit this time of year doesn't really hold my interests. I'm not a traditionalist at heart so the holidays are a take-it-or-leave-it kind of thing. I've survived a few solo Christmases where I didn't see or talk to anyone. It may sound depressing but it was actually peaceful and anxiety-free!

No family drama (by proxy), no awkward gift exchanges, no "ice breaker" activities, and I had my fill of holiday classics. It's the ultimate introvert's dream...okay, so maybe I am a little Grinchy!

I look forward to a future Christmas when everything I've lost or forfeited is finally and fully restored.

In the meantime, if I accept an invitation to your dinner table, consider yourself especially blessed!

Thank You!

Thank you for reading the December newsletter!

I hope you enjoy the holiday season!

"Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father (Col. 3:16-17).

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Contact me: Tiffany@bigviewsmallwindow.com

Special notification:

This is the last *monthly* newsletter. In 2022, the newsletter will be published quarterly with the first issue appearing around the first day of Spring! In the meantime, you'll receive more frequent email updates with blogs, podcasts, and random thoughts of the day! Thank you for supporting Big View Small Window!

So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

2 Corinthians 4:18

Next Issue: Spring 2022

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