



A new year - the fresh start always seems to bring a little sparkle of hope to the daily grind of life. I don't think it is by accident or

coincidence that the new year comes in the middle of winter for many of us. The early sunsets and the long nights seems to breed a sense of hopelessness that can be overwhelming at times. The holiday season of Christmas is oftentimes dashed by the dark and dreary weather of winter and quickly fades into the pages of our photo albums. At the same time, Christmas is a celebration that changes everything.

The origins of Christmas are not necessarily centered on the birth of Jesus. In fact, the beginnings are celebrations of other gods in various pagan traditions. However, as the church grew and spread around the world, these various traditions within cultures were adapted and changed to involve and eventually focus on a new reason for celebration. I recall a pastor who regularly shared that on our birthday we should celebrate our mother for she was the hero that brought about the life we celebrate. In a similar fashion I look at Christmas as a celebration that we should pause and remember a bit differently than the traditional holidays. Christmas is unique and special when we choose to celebrate the coming of the Messiah.

You see, almost every holiday or celebration can be traced back to a selfish, self-centered or even pagan motivation. And yet, every



celebration can also be driven by a fresh perspective when the Holy Spirit drives our decisions and actions.

Another example could be the halloween festivities that seem to capture the minds and hearts of so many each year. It too can be seen from a unique perspective because

it was on that day that Martin Luther posted the 95 Theses on the door of All Saint's Church to usher in the beginning of the Reformation and Protestantism as we know it. One celebration of darkness and another of light! Just as the Bible references the consistent battle of light and darkness, we see the battle played out in our social cultures.

So where does that bring us today? Well, we continually have a choice to choose light over darkness. Every day we celebrate life and the joys of His faithfulness to us, we choose light! When the culture around us focuses on the selfish motivations of holidays, and we choose to focus on the life giving sacrifices of Jesus and all that He brings to our lives, we choose light! When the world

around us is driven by the desire to satisfy the human want for more stuff and more



pleasure yet, we choose to be driven by the fruit of the Spirit and the quest for His righteousness, we choose LIGHT!

As you and I enter this new year together, I challenge you to choose light. Make the choice to think on the things of God. Meditate on His Word. Listen to His voice. Respond to His callings. The one thing I can share with you that can impact your life more than anything else this year is **God will remain faithful!** He will do in and through us everything He has promised. Oftentimes He is already doing those things. We are focused on the wrong things, and therefore, do not see it. So, in 2023 join me in intentionally focusing on the LIGHT. Look with me for the opportunities the Lord is orchestrating in each of our journeys to reshape the celebration into one focused on His goodness and greatness. Seek His righteousness first and anticipate His Spirit to open eyes to see and ears to hear His power at work all around us. Join us in 2023 as we reach the world and teach the Word in celebration of the LIGHT that cannot be overtaken by the darkness!



December has always held my favorite memories from adulthood. Seeing the twinkle lights, the smiles on kids' faces, Jesse tree devotions, and the anticipation of excitement, peace, and rest bring such joy to my heart. As many of you parents know, it also magnifies the changing of seasons in the family as children go off to college or live in other places or have families of their own. Time passes, and the way the holidays are celebrated changes. Yet, it is still good! We see God's hand in so many ways.

This year, Kaitlyn's life looks different as she has a significant other whom we love dearly. We will introduce you all soon. Madison came home from Washington, DC, where she is in her last semester of graduate school at George Washington University. Jett finished his first semester at Mississippi College and took the title of "king of sleeping" to a new level during the break. Zeke and Elly completed the first semester of their sophomore year in high school and enjoyed time away from homework.

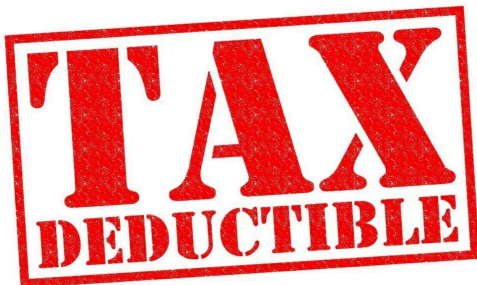
While Madison was home, she became sick but pushed through as much as possible. She returned to DC but ended up in the hospital. As I type this, she is still there, and I'm on my way to her. My mom heart is overwhelmed with the anticipation of putting my eyes on my child and helping her as much as possible. Please keep her in your prayers as her medical journey is often complicated and hard.

I hope we will all face 2023 with passion and excitement for the Savior's work in and through His people. May we be obedient to His commands and follow Him completely. I am grateful for you all! - Sheryl Turner



Fun times with our GranMary and Aunt Michelle.

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July 15-22	Guatemala	Community Outreach/Food Dist.	OPEN

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