

ADVENT 2023

Capturing
Meaning

Have Yourself A

Merry
Little
CHRISTMAS





PEOPLE IN SANTA COSTUMES RIDE ON MOTORBIKES NEAR THE EIFFEL TOWER DURING "CARABALADE," THE ANNUAL SANTA CLAUS PARADE IN PARIS, FRANCE, ON DECEMBER 20, 2018. CHARLES PLATIAU / REUTERS

❧ It is not unusual for the Advent season to whiz by so quickly that we don't realize we are in it until it is almost over. Each year, Grace Community Church provides an Advent guide to help approach the season with intentionality and a heart fixed towards hopeful anticipation of Jesus' presence with us.

To make best use of this guide, read the Introduction before you begin. Then progress through one week at a time, setting aside at least 30 minutes for reflection and associated activities. Family reflection and activities are included at the end of each section.

IT HAS BEEN A JOY PREPARING THIS GUIDE FOR YOU, AND OUR SINCERE PRAYER IS THAT IT CONTRIBUTES MEANINGFULLY TO YOUR ABILITY TO HAVE YOURSELF A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS. ❧



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GIRLS LIGHT CANDLES IN BETHLEHEM AT THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY ON DECEMBER 23, 2018. MUSSA QAWASMA / REUTERS

🌀 As we stand poised for the holiday season to begin, we have the opportunity to consider how we can capture it's true meaning for ourselves. **ADVENT IS A TIME OF EXPECTANT WAITING AND PREPARATION FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF JESUS' BIRTH. IT IS A CELEBRATION OF WHAT MAKES OUR FAITH POSSIBLE, CENTERING ON THE JOY FOUND IN RECEIVING GOD'S GIFT OF PEACE AND HIS PROMISE TO MAKE THE BROKEN WHOLE AGAIN!** That is, always has been, and always will be the core reason for the season.

Though the meaning of Christmas does not change year to year, our experience of it certainly can. Some years seem to overflow with feelings of contentment and happiness. Others are attended by the sting of what—or who—is missing from the picture. Remaining rooted in the central meaning of Christmas permits us to engage both gratitude for what is and grief for what is not, both in the presence of our Savior. **WE CAN COME INTO THE PRESENCE OF JESUS—IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US—IN CONFIDENT EXPECTATION THAT HE WILL WILLINGLY EMBRACE US IN BOTH OUR GRATITUDE AND OUR GRIEF.** As the Savior come to earth, he was fully human and experienced all the joys and pains that we do. He knows what it means to drink deeply from the well of God's goodness, at the same time that his are understanding arms in which to cry. Acknowledging gratitude for what is and allowing grief for what is not in the presence of our Savior prepares the soil of our hearts with Jesus' nourishment and joy.



18-MONTH-OLD BRIELL DIGIACOM OF LONE TREE, CO, EXPRESSES HERSELF WHILE POSING FOR A PHOTO WITH SANTA CLAUS WITH HER 4-YEAR-OLD SISTER, KERI, DECEMBER 24, 2018, IN CASTLE ROCK, COLORADO. -DAVID ZALUBOWSKI / AP

It is also worth noting that what is meaningful for ourselves often differs from what is meaningful for others. Just like our faith, it isn't always expressed identically from person to person. This recognition helps us to appreciate the myriad ways that Jesus meets us in our humanity to bring us joy, peace, and Himself!

OUR DESIRE FOR THIS GUIDE IS TO CULTIVATE AN ATTITUDE OF OPEN CURIOSITY, EXPLORING TOGETHER THE MANY WAYS WE CAN CAPTURE THE CENTRAL MEANING OF ADVENT. We have structured this guide to examine how people develop meaning through traditions. You will be given opportunity for reflection to encourage deeper understanding of your own traditions. Throughout the process, give yourself permission to capture meaning that is **PRAYERFUL, PERSONALIZED, AND PURPOSEFUL.**

Prayerful

Prayerfully think through the holiday activities you have planned, the expectations you carry, and your December calendar. What can you add or take away to grow your wonder and joy? What about your approach to the season will help you to know Christ and make him known? What will deepen your capacity to love your Savior, self and others well? What will hinder these efforts?

Personalized

What aspects of the coming season are you most excited about? What losses, unmet longings, or sorrows might be magnified this season? How can you make space as needed for both gratitude and grief this season?

Purposeful

Intentions orient our heart to what we want to seek; plans help us to actually carry out what we've set our heart on. Make a plan for how you will use this guide. Write out the time you will set aside each week, who will be present for the discussion and activities, and where you'll be.



-COMMON CULTURAL TRADITIONS-

Throughout his ministry, Jesus asked people to take stock of their traditions and to evaluate whether they functioned in ways that were helpful or counterproductive. He viewed those that brought us closer to God and into alignment with His ways as helpful, and those that brought us out of sync with Him as harmful.

Common cultural traditions give us the sense that we are part of something larger than ourselves. **WE DERIVE A SENSE OF MEANING FROM WELL-WORN CUSTOMS THAT EVOKE OUR OWN MEMORIES AND OUR COLLECTIVE HOLIDAY SPIRIT.** Very few traditions arise out of nowhere. They are frequently tied to a symbolic meaning that encourages us to remember something important. They are part of a collective story we are writing about what we value and why.

Here are a few of our common cultural traditions and where they come from:

- ★ It is believed that Boniface, an 8th century English missionary, instituted the first Christmas tree. He was attempting to convert the Druids who worshipped oak trees. He instead offered the balsam fir tree, using its triangular shape to describe the Trinity and the fact that its evergreen boughs pointed to heaven as a symbol of the one true God.
- ★ Gift giving is a very ancient tradition practiced throughout the world, with roots in expressions of thanks for bountiful provision at times of harvest. It became incorporated into Christmas traditions in recognition of the tributes brought by the Magi to the baby Jesus.

- ★ Decorating the exterior of homes originated in north America during the Great Depression, when electric lights were becoming more widely available and people embraced them as a way to bring cheer and boost morale during that period of struggle.

Knowing the origin of our fondest traditions helps connect them to the larger meaning of Christmas. Christianity does not dictate we forego our cultural traditions, but rather that we consider them in light of the larger meaning of the season and make decisions about them accordingly.

COMMON TRADITIONS IN OTHER CULTURES

- ★ In Greece, boats called “karavaki” (or Christmas Boat) are decorated rather than Christmas trees. In Aristotelous Square in the city of Thessaloniki a huge Christmas tree and a 3-mast sailing ship are set up.
- ★ In the Philipians, the Christmas season begins in September and lasts all the way through the middle of January! They celebrate the longest of anyone in the world!
- ★ In Greenland, Christmas trees have to be imported, often from Denmark, because trees don’t grow that far north! Traditional gifts are model sledges, polished walrus tusks or sealskin mittens.
- ★ In Argentina it is warm during the Christmas season, so people like to put cotton balls on their Christmas trees to look like snow! Christmas decorations go up by December 8th—the day they celebrate Mary being told by the angel she was going to have Jesus. Kids get their presents on January 6th, a day known as “Three Kings Day.”
- ★ Serbians follow the Julian Calander, so Christmas day is celebrated on January 7th. They put straw under the table to remember that Jesus was born in a stable. After Christmas the straw is bundled up and hung outside on fruit trees in hopes that the trees will bear fruit in the harvest season!

Prayerful

Read Matthew 15:1-20. What does Jesus have to say about traditions? Pray about your own approach to traditions. Where might God be asking you to be more faithful to tradition, and where might He be asking you to let go?

Personalized

List all the family traditions you've had throughout the years, past and present, both small and big, just-for-fun and filled with meaning. Which tradition is your favorite, and why? Reflect on each of the traditions on your list: the meaning they have, how they came about, and the impact they have on the holiday season. Are they just a fun activity, did they deepen the awe and reverence of the season, or some combination of both?

Purposeful

After taking stock, is there anything lacking? More time to simply find joy and have fun? More traditions that contribute to a deeper appreciation of Jesus and His birth? How can you intentionally adjust your traditions accordingly?



FANS OF THE FC UNION FOOTBALL CLUB GATHER IN THE CLUB'S STADIUM TO SING CHRISTMAS CAROLS ON DECEMBER 23, 2018, IN BERLIN, GERMANY. THE ANNUAL GATHERING HAS BECOME A FIRM TRADITION, NOW IN ITS 16TH YEAR. ALL 28,500 TICKETS WERE SOLD. - MICHELE TANTUSSI / GETTY

Family Corner

Reflection

Have each member of your family share their favorite family tradition and why they like it.

Talk together about which traditions help us remember who Jesus is and why He came. Why do you think celebrating Jesus' birthday important?

If you could give Jesus a birthday present, what would it be? What would you include if you were planning His birthday party?

Activities

Find a Christmas tradition that is different from your own. Consider one from a country you have heritage or connection with, or an activity that simply sounds interesting or fun. Use this tradition to try something different—to experience Christmas in a new and fresh way—as a means to enliven yourself to the new reality of what His coming represented that night in Bethlehem, and what this means to people all over the world!

Grace Community Church has a new tradition we started a couple of years ago—looking for Lucas the Christmas spider hidden somewhere in the church. Make sure to try to find him on Sunday! [Click here](#) for a story telling the Ukrainian Christmas Spider tradition

As a family, begin practicing the Grace Airways memory verse for Advent: “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord.” -Luke 2:11



-HOPE THROUGH INTENTIONALITY-

We all write a story with our lives. We progress through various chapters, have significant people move in and out of the storyline, focus our attention on specific themes, and are shaped by key moments. Whether or not we attend to the story, we are indeed telling one.

OUR STORY IS FORMED BY THE DAY BY DAY, YEAR BY YEAR DECISIONS WE MAKE. The traditions and activities that surround our holiday celebrations mark the unique story of our particular families. Some of these have been passed down, generation by generation, having begun in far away lands with far away customs. Others stem from our response to the particular life stage and season we are in. In this way, the story we tell with the way we celebrate Christmas is shaped by our family history, upbringing, experiences and memories of the holiday season.

You probably have many traditions associated with Christmas, built on all those years of personal history. Whether its family, food, excursions, or arguing over when the season officially begins, the trappings of Christmas are replete with many different components which contribute to our experience of its meaning. For those with good experiences, your story of Christmas is likely one with overtones of joy, peace, and comfort. When your story has involved struggle, hurt, and unmet expectations it can read with more stress, sorrow, and a feeling of emptiness.

PART OF INTENTIONALITY IN CHRISTMAS MEANS EVALUATING THE STORY YOU HAVE, AND WHICH PARTS OF IT YOU WANT TO CARRY WITH YOU INTO THE NEXT CHAPTERS. Forgoing our traditions requires forgetting our history, while overemphasizing traditions waters them down and thus

robs their purpose; Christ desires neither! The point is not so much what we do, but why we do it. Being intentional simply means to do something on purpose. Taking stock of our traditions and what they mean allows us to orient ourselves to what they say about our story.

FOR THOSE OF US WHO HAVE FAITH IN CHRIST, A MAJOR THEME OF OUR STORY IS HOPE. Hope is found in our God who is with us—redeeming our stories by the power of His Spirit who makes the most remarkable things out of all our intentions! Using the lens of God’s purpose through which to consider how our choices inform the story of our lives gives us a hopeful vision from which to rest. As we do things on purpose with this vision of Christ’s power working in and among us we are released from doing something just because it has always been done or the culture seems to demand it. Instead we can pursue our own choice to continue (or not) from a posture of hope.

Living with intentionality also assists us in respecting the limitations of our actual lives—be they financial, time, our physical bodies, skills and abilities, whatever form they take. Many of these are legitimate pain points which can become amplified by the Christmas season. **HOPE OFFERS US THE REASSURANCE THAT GOD HAS DRAWN NEAR TO US, UNDERSTANDS OUR FRAILTIES, AND HOLDS US IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND.** We can trust him with every insufficiency. He can complete everything that we could not. Limitations also open the door for creativity, as we work within what we’ve been given, and for cultivating trust in Jesus that is deeper than we would have otherwise!

We are always in the process of writing our story, whether we know it or not. And we can’t forget that other stories are being written parallel to and in conjunction with our own! **THE BEAUTY OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS GOD’S EMPHATIC INTERJECTION INTO THE STORY OF THE ENTIRE WORLD, INTRODUCING TO EVERYONE THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF HISTORY, WHO WANTS TO ENTER INTO OUR PART OF THE STORY AND BRING IN NEW LIFE, HOPE, AND A PROMISE FOR A STORY THAT ENDS WITH THE REDEMPTION OF ALL BROKEN THINGS!**

Prayerful

Read Psalm 139. Prayerfully reflect on what it means for God to hold your story in His hands (as verse 16 indicates). Take note of anything from the psalm that makes it easier to entrust your story to God.

Personalized

If someone else were to watch your life like a movie, what would their main takeaways be about what is important to you? What would you need to adjust about the script for hope to shine as a major theme?

Purposeful

Remember, Jesus is the meaning—not the activities we do, the feelings we have or the behaviors we hope for. With respect to the season you are in and any relevant limitations, how can you release yourself from obligations or expectations accordingly? With a hope-filled vision of Christ's power working in and among you, what activities will you persevere in?



A MAN DRESSED IN A SANTA OUTFIT TOURS A NEIGHBORHOOD ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE IRAQI CENTRAL CITY OF NAJAF ON DECEMBER 25, 2018.- HAIDAR HAMDANI / AFP / GETTY

Family Corner

Reflection

Share with each other about what your favorite book or story is. What makes it special?

Read Luke 2:8-20 as a family. What was the main point of the message the angel gave the shepherds?

What does hope mean? Develop a definition together as a family. Then talk about why Jesus is our source of hope.

Activities

Go outside together after it is dark. (If possible, drive a little ways out of town so you can see the stars more clearly.) Look up at the dark sky, then have someone turn on a bright flashlight and shine it in directly at each person. What is it like to have a bright light suddenly appear in the dark? How is that similar to what the shepherds experienced? What do you imagine the glory of God shining around the shepherds was like?

Write a play together that reenacts the angel coming to give good news of great joy to the shepherds. Get as creative as you want, with dialog, costumes, props, etc. Use your imagination to think about the story in new ways! For example, if the sheep could talk, what would they say? Put the play on together, perhaps with grandparents as an audience (they love that sort of thing!).

Continue practicing the Grace Airways memory verse for Advent: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord." -Luke 2:11



- RELEASE EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT MAKES OR BREAKS CHRISTMAS-

One classic Christmas song leads us down a potentially problematic path—"It's the most wonderful time of the year." The lyrics of this song underscore all the reasons that Christmas is supposed to be special, or somehow better than any other time of the year. It's the happ-happiest season of all! However, consider Mary, the mother of Jesus. The angel had told her she was highly favored—she had found favor with God! Then there was all the loneliness, the misunderstandings, the rejections that followed. It seems likely it would have been a long and exhausting nine months for Mary and Joseph! Then they arrive in Bethlehem to discover no room for them. Was a stable really the way the Lord favors? The baby would be coming soon; were they to have him *here*? **RIGHT FROM THE VERY FIRST CHRISTMAS, THERE WERE HUMANS COPING WITH UNMET EXPECTATIONS AND WHAT THEY MIGHT MEAN.**

For us, the problem comes in when we get too invested in trying to *make* Christmas the most wonderful time of the year, instead of simply acknowledging that it *is* the most wonderful time of the year. **BECAUSE IT CELEBRATES THE ARRIVAL OF OUR SAVIOR, CHRISTMAS IS ALREADY SPECIAL!** Christmas doesn't actually need us to make it special, because Jesus doesn't need us to make him special. Nothing we contribute can fundamentally add to or diminish the magnitude of who Jesus is, the work he has done on our behalf, and how much he loves us. Neither providing a perfected party nor failing to live up to some

expectation—external or self-imposed—can alter the intrinsic meaning of Christmas. We can lean into this knowledge to release ourselves to just celebrate Jesus.

THE BEAUTY OF OUR SAVIOR IS THAT FROM THE BEGINNING HE SETS US UP FOR JOY IN THE MIDST OF HEARTACHE, DISCOMFORT, AND UNLIKELY CIRCUMSTANCES. You see, Jesus does not need us, but He desperately wants us! It is for that reason He drew close to us, coming as a baby, born in that stable so long ago. The first Christmas and all the Christmases to follow are therefore not dependent on us ensuring everything goes perfectly. To borrow the comforting assurance of the words of Dr. Seuss: “He hadn’t stopped Christmas from coming, it came. Somehow or other it came just the same.”

The celebration of Jesus’ birth as it occurred 2000 years ago would probably be considered meager by the standards of our culture. No ceremony, no feast, and besides a few lowly shepherds, no grand announcement broadcast to the world. Yet our celebration is meaningless without the occurrence of His birth! **SIMPLE DOESN’T MEAN UNADORNED OR UNCEREMONIOUS. IT MEANS THAT ALL OF WHAT WE PUT FORTH IS ORIENTED TOWARD OUR LOVE FOR JESUS AND A DESIRE TO GLORIFY AND CELEBRATE HIM, THE WAY HE DESIRES WE DO**—by drawing close to Him and experiencing the joy, peace, and love that His birth inaugurated and commemorates!

[Click here](#) to view a spoken word piece which provides a beautiful reminder that Jesus came, and that alone is enough.



Celebrate simply Jesus!

Prayerful

Read Luke 2. What expectations might the people in the story have had about Jesus' birth? Were they met or unmet? Prayerfully consider your own expectations about Christmas. Are you willing to hold them lightly, making space for God to do something different than you expect?

Personalized

What simple and small ways have you experienced Jesus' peace so far this season? What can you store up in your heart to think of often, like Mary did (Luke 2:19)?

Purposeful

Gather around candlelight at some point this week and reread Luke 2:1-7, reflecting on the love and simple beauty of our Savior who came. Deliberately create a space that is quiet and calm, free of extra noise or distraction. Permit yourself time to sit in this space, meditating on who Jesus is and resting in Him.



A GIRL LOOKS AT CHRISTMAS TREES OUTSIDE A STORE IN GOMA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, ON DECEMBER 22, 2018. -PATRICK MEINHARDT / AFP / GETTY

Family Corner

Reflection

Talk about a time when things did not go the way you had planned or wanted them to go. Did it turn out okay in the end, or not? How did you feel about the situation? (Make sure to emphasize to children that feeling glad and feeling sad—or some combination of both—are normal responses to unmet expectations, and that we can talk about these feelings with people we love and with God.)

Can anyone stop Christmas from coming? Why or why not? What might this mean for whether anyone can stop God's plan?

Activities

Watch or read Dr. Seuss's *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, talking with your family about the truth that "Christmas came, it came just the same."

Make a list of everything that makes Christmas special. This can include activities, events, traditions, objects, food—anything that is special to you. Then cross off anything from the list that is not strictly *required* in order for you to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. How would Christmas look different if the things you crossed off did not happen this year? What does this mean for what you *need* to have at Christmas versus what you *want* to have? (Keep this list!—you'll need it next week.)

See if you can recite the Grace Airways memory verse for Advent! (Look back to page 13 if you need a refresher.)



- JOY IN CHRISTMAS -

ONE OF THE JOYS OF CHRISTMAS IS EXPERIENCING IT THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD. Children permit themselves to get swept up in the wonder and delight of the season, instead of tied up in the anxiety and busyness that can characterize the adult experience of the holidays.

In Matthew 7:9-11, Jesus makes the point that if human beings know how to give good gifts to those they love, how much more true is it that God knows how to give good gifts to His children? **THERE IS GOODNESS IN OUR WORLD BECAUSE A GOOD GOD PUT IT THERE, AND IT STANDS TO REASON THAT IF HE PUT IT THERE, IT IS BECAUSE HE MEANT FOR IT TO BE ENJOYED.** To paraphrase Matthew 7 a bit, if earthly fathers get joy from watching wonder and delight through the eyes of their children, how much more so does our heavenly Father experience joy at watching the wonder and delight of His children?

It is commonly recognized that the holidays are a time to set down some of our responsibilities. This is most formally accomplished by the fact that most employers provide time off of work. There is value in simply resting from work; there is also value in engaging fun. We have all heard it said that laughter is the best medicine, and increasingly the science is bearing this out as correct—laughter reduces stress, soothes tension, improves mood, and can even relieve pain.

Not every tradition needs to have a deep and somber spiritual significance. **SOMETIMES, BRINGING A SMILE TO GOD'S FACE BY PURSUING DELIGHT AND ENJOYMENT FOR THEIR OWN SAKE IS REASON ENOUGH.**

Erik and his wife hide the three wisemen for their kids to find and add to the nativity.

MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS

Mel's children receive big balls of streamer with small gifts and coins wrapped inside that they race to unroll.

Jonathan finds a time to secretly stuff his wife's stocking full of little surprises.

Brandy's family eats at a gas station on Christmas Eve and everyone gets to pick anything they want for their dinner, even if it's all junk food.

MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS

Dale's family reads from a book called *Jotham's Journey*, about a Jewish boy's journey to Bethlehem, and then enjoys a cup of eggnog together.

Chelsea's family makes hundreds of buckeyes (peanut butter balls) while they dance in the kitchen and steal "taste tests."

Robin's family builds elaborate gingerbread houses...and then blows them up with fireworks on New Year's Eve!

GCC Staff's Fun Traditions

Prayerful

CS Lewis once wrote in an essay: “When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up.”

For adults, with or without children, the Christmas season provides many opportunities for the child within us to relearn the story of the birth of Christ through play, imagination and fun. Read Matthew 7:9-11. Prayerfully consider your approach to the holidays. Where might you “put away the fear of childishness” and embrace our good God’s gift of fun?

Personalized

What have you enjoyed and delighted in most this season? What fun awaits you in the coming week?

Purposeful

What just-for-fun things will you be sure to protect for yourself and/or your family?



WATERSKIING REINDEER MAKE THEIR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS EVE APPEARANCE ALONG THE WATERFRONT IN ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA, ON DECEMBER 24, 2018. -JAMES LAWLER DUGGAN / REUTERS

Family Corner

Reflection

Which parts of Christmas do you think are the most fun? What parts do you think God might like the most? Make sure you tell children that God created everything, including fun!

Who do you think is better at having fun—grown ups or kids? What advice would grown ups give to kids about having fun? What advice would *kids* give to *grown ups* about how to have fun?

Activities

Revisit the list of activities you made during Week Three (page 17). Which ones fall into the category of just-for-fun? Pick one or two to do together as a family, making sure to take time before, during or after to give thanks to God that He created fun and wants us to enjoy good things!

Play a game of “make me laugh.” See who in your family is the easiest to make laugh, and who is hardest. For even more fun, make a recording of yourselves laughing and then play it back so you can hear what it sounds like!

Give the kids control! Set aside some time for purely child-guided activities. Make sure to set up ground rules (e.g., whether it can cost money, can be outside the house, etc.), then allow them to pick whatever they want to do. All the grown ups have to participate in the activities with the kids. Get creative—the sillier, the better!



-FINAL REFLECTION JOY IN CHRISTMAS-

As the holiday season reaches its pinnacle, carve out a few minutes for final reflection on how these past weeks went. Are there things you tried that failed miserably, or things that sparked a new sense of wonder, peace, or joy?

Taking time to reflect helps us live fully into the reality of our lives. Remember, capturing the central meaning of Christmas permits us to engage both gratitude for what is and grief for what is not. We lay these before the presence of our Savior, trusting in His work on our behalf. He came as a baby to be with us and to rescue us!

JOY COMES FROM A SETTLED ASSURANCE THAT GOD LOVES ME, IS WITH ME, HAS FORGIVEN ME, AND IS IN CONTROL OF ALL THE DETAILS OF MY LIFE—WORKING IN EVERYTHING FOR MY GOOD AND HIS GLORY.



A MAN DRESSED AS SANTA CLAUS HOLDS A FLARE AS HE SITS IN A BOAT DURING CHRISTMAS EVE CELEBRATIONS IN IMPERIA, ITALY, ON DECEMBER 24, 2018. ANTONIO CALANNI / AP

Prayerful

Pray over the difficult conversations and situations you experienced this season. Ask God to help you let love lead your thoughts, plans and decisions for changes you may need to make next year. Release outcomes into the capable hands of your Savior—resting in your identity as His child.

Personalized

What expectations or demands added stress to your holiday season? Where would it have been useful to accept Jesus' invitation to lean in and let go?

Purposeful

The celebration of Christmas is a reminder of the joy that is available to us in Jesus! What ways did the traditions and activities you participated in help you to capture meaning? Where did the peace of Christ rule in your heart? What enabled you to practice loving like Jesus loves?

Family Corner

Let's join with Charlie Brown and Linus in remembering just what Christmas is all about:

[Click here](#) to view a scene from Charles Shultz' *Charlie Brown Christmas*



PEOPLE SIT ON A PROMENADE ILLUMINATED WITH COLORED LIGHTS AS PART OF CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS IN MUMBAI, INDIA, ON DECEMBER 24, 2018. -DANISH SIDDIQUI / REUTERS

A Merry Little Christmas

Sundays @ 8:30am & 10:30am
Christmas Eve @ 4pm & 5:30pm
www.gracecomm.org

* PHOTOS TAKEN FROM: [HTTPS://WWW.THEATLANTIC.COM/PHOTO/2018/12/PHOTOS-CHRISTMAS-AROUND-THE-WORLD-2018/579022/](https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2018/12/photos-christmas-around-the-world-2018/579022/)

*FUN FACTS TAKEN FROM WYCLIFFE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS WITH KATE AND MACK, [HTTPS://WWW.WYCLIFFE.ORG/RESOURCES/KIDS](https://www.wycliffe.org/resources/kids)