



THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTMAS, PART 2: SAINT NICHOLAS

Santa Claus is real. It rarely snows where he's from. Palm trees and orange groves dot the landscape. If you went there today, you wouldn't hear sleigh bells, but the sound of the Muslim call to prayer from the minarets of the town mosques. Born in 260AD, St. Nicholas was from a wealthy trading family off the seacoast of Turkey. But when he was a teenager, tragedy struck, and he lost both of his parents in a pandemic. Nicholas used his inheritance to love and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and became a leader of the early church.

But the problem with Santa Claus today is that most people believe that nice people go to heaven, naughty people go to Hell. That God is making a list and he's checking it twice. But the problem we discover is that no one nice makes it to heaven.

BIG IDEA: God love. God gave. We believe. We receive.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

** Remember the goal is to use the questions to generate discussion, not to complete every one.*

1. When you were a child, what role did Santa play in the holiday season? Do you have a favorite story of Santa Claus growing up?
2. Chris shared the true story of St. Nicholas: the pain of losing his parents, his inheritance, and his generosity. What were some of the things you learned?
3. How do you think the average person would describe the requirements for getting into heaven?
4. Chris said, *"The biggest problem of Santa Claus is having the Santa Claus Mentality. People think that if they're a nice person, then they go to heaven. But if they're a naughty person, then they go to Hell. In their mind, God's making a list and he's checking it twice. He's going to find out who's naughty or nice."* With your Bible or Bible App, read the following passages:

As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous—not even one.

[*Romans 3:10 \(NLT\)*](#)

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

[*Romans 3:23 \(NLT\)*](#)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

[*Romans 6:23 \(NLT\)*](#)

5. According to the verses above, how good is good enough to get to heaven? What does the Bible have to say about the idea that nice people go to heaven, naughty people go to Hell?

*The problem with the Santa Claus Mentality is that it leads people to ask,
"What good deed do I have to do to make it to heaven?"*

6. With your Bible or Bible App, read [*John 3:16-17*](#).

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

[*John 3:16-17*](#)

7. To become a Christian, a person needs to know that (*fill in the blanks*):

God _____ us.

God _____ us His son.

8. To become a Christian, a person needs to (*fill in the blanks*):

We need to _____ in Jesus and what He's done FOR us.

Then we _____ the gift of eternal life.

9. In question 3, you answered, *How do you think the average person would describe the requirements for getting into heaven?* How would you describe those requirements in light of this session?

10. Name two people in your sphere of influence who don't know that God loves them and forgives them.

11. If you had to guess, what are some of the complications that have prevented them from understanding God's simple message?

MOVING FORWARD

Using the four words from John 3:16 that were highlighted in this session, describe some of the ways you are aware of God's love for you; what it means to you that He gave His son Jesus for you; how you know that you are trusting in Jesus for eternal life. Could you explain these experiences to a non-believing friend?

WEEKLY READING

This week, spend some time reading and reflecting on *John 3:16-17, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:9-10, 1 John 5:10-13.*

CHANGING YOUR MIND

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3:16-17