



# Study Guide

*In accompaniment with the 4-Part Video Series by Meg Bucher of <http://sunnyand80.org>*

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



The \_\_\_\_\_  
comes into \_\_\_\_\_  
as we \_\_\_\_\_ **Christmas.**

Each year God peels back a layer, rich with newly appreciated memories and formative ones of the present. I look forward to it more and more ...and begin to celebrate, decorate, and sing carols earlier and earlier with each passing year ...in anticipation of the magical way God reveals Himself during the Christmas season.

There's something uniquely grand about the birthday celebration that greed attempts to block out and political correctness to subdue. Carefully crafted by it's Creator, and grandly announced by angels, it's impossible to squelch the hope of the entire planet birthed.

***What does it mean?***

**JESUS.**

Join me as I unwrap new presents of this Christmas' presence ...in the Christmas Series ..."What does it mean?"

WHAT DOES IT MEAN, WEEK 1:

# NOEL



#yulesee

*Christmas Series*

<http://sunnyand80.org>

*“What Does It Mean”  
Week One:  
Noel.*

PUBLISHED ON [December 7, 2016](#)

# Noel

1. A Christmas carol.

2. (*capitalized*) Christmas.

-Merriam-Webster

Noel is a word meant to remind us of our place ...our heritage ...our hope.



\_\_\_\_\_ *antagonism*

*with the familiar* \_\_\_\_\_ *of faith.*

*Another name for Christmas. French Noël (“Christmas season”), may come from the Old French nael. This, in turn, is derived from the Latin natalis, meaning “birth.” - Wikipedia*



Look at the time.

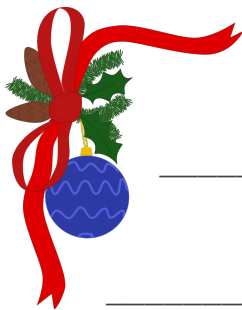
*” Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” Luke 2:11*



My neighbor gave me a Christmas Cactus last year, which she told me only blooms at Christmas-time. I wanted to see if I could keep it alive until it was time for it to bloom again. So, I forgot to water it most of the winter, re-potted it in the spring, and continued to forget to water it the rest of the year.

Beyond my ability to care for it, it survived. The first week of the Advent (Christmas) season, it began to flower. It's in a pot ... on my desk ...in Ohio ...and it's a cactus. But God said, "it's time."

**Time: an appointed, fixed, or customary moment or hour for something to happen, begin, or end. (Merriam-Webster, 3B)**



Behind \_\_\_\_\_ human being is a

\_\_\_\_\_ in a womb that God's hand

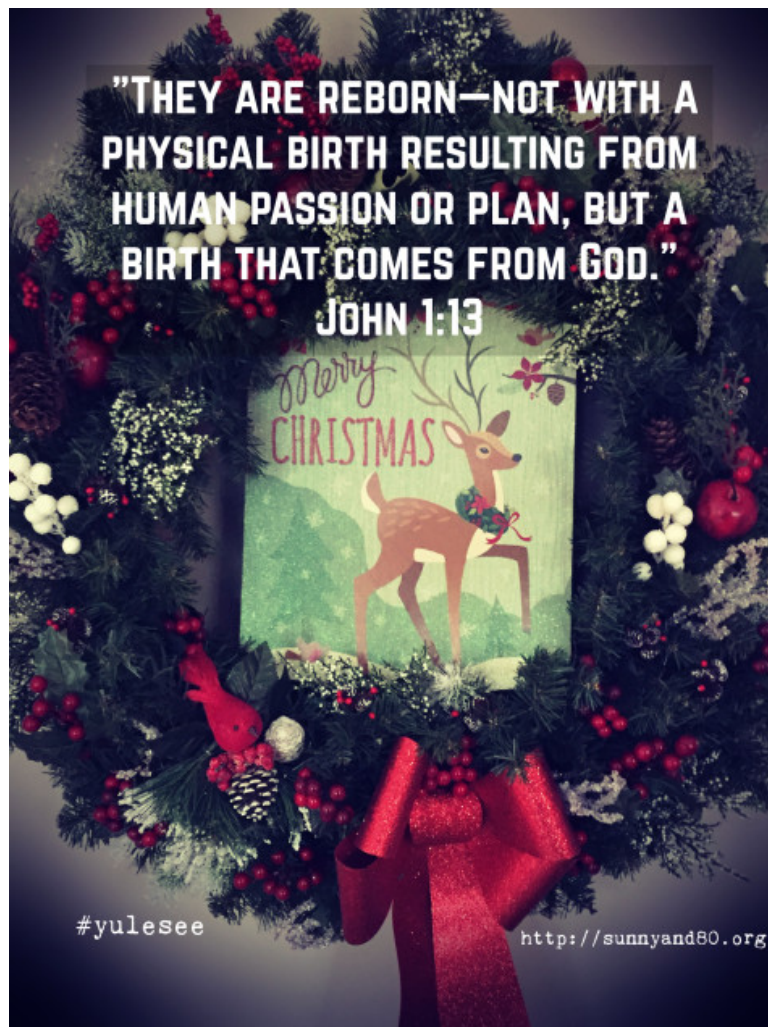
\_\_\_\_\_ to the tune, "it's time."

We can trust the Author of Life, and the proof is Jesus. That day in the town of David, God said, “it’s time,” and born was the Savior of the world, a vulnerable baby boy who needed to be held and nurtured and loved. Born to hold, nurture, and love us for all time. Noel ...a birthday.

## Sing Noel.

***“He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.” John 1:10-13***

My first visit to a new optometrist revealed a change in my vision. He prescribed a pair of glasses to combat the glare of the computer screen and the sunshine. Each morning, I faithfully clean and prepare them for the day with a special cloth and spray. It’s worth it to me. I appreciate the view. Guess what? They’re shatterproof, too. My new vision is as protected as it could possibly be.



When Zechariah lost his ability to see God clearly, he lost his speech along with it. **He doubted the vision he saw.** He questioned the message. At his son's birth, his speech was restored. Jesus restored our hope with His. Might something we were previously unaware of be blocking Him from our vision?

The b-side of birth lies beyond God's creation of our physicality.



He \_\_\_\_\_

the \_\_\_\_\_ of

\_\_\_\_\_ into our DNA.

A gift of grace allowed by the sacrifice of that baby boy born in the town of David. The opportunity to break free and follow Him home. The power of purpose as our feet tread the dirt of this Earth. When Christ is our personal Savior, the silence is lifted from our souls and our vision realigned ...like getting new glasses. In a fresh hug of friendship defined, we are born ...again.

Believe. See...

***"Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel ...born is the King of Israel."***

***"Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel ...born is the King of Israel."***

***-The First Noel Christmas Carol***

Sing in celebration that Jesus was born to save us. It's not just any birthday celebration.



Christmas is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Father

and the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Son that transcends the

encapsulation of time.

**birth: the emergence of a new individual from the body of its parent.**  
(Merriam-Webster.)

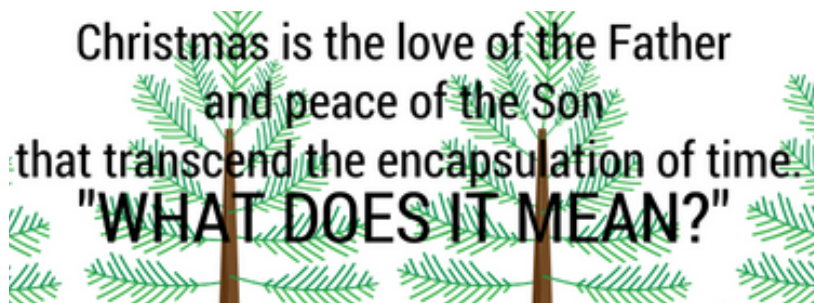
God said, "it's time," and like the wind blows when He says and the seas calm at His hand, Heaven came to earth embodied in His Son. And we not only get to partake in this love story ...we are the center of it.

*Can you see it?*

**Noel.**

***Emerge.***

**It's time.**







*“What Does It Mean?”*  
*Week Two:*  
*Emmanuel*

PUBLISHED ON [December 13, 2016](#)

*“They will name him Immanuel (Hebrew for “God is with us”).”  
Matthew 1:23 (MSG)*

Jesus appeased the ardent anticipation of our hearts. The questions have been answered. The gaps have been filled. Hope is available for the world to receive.



“Emmanuel” explains how God \_\_\_\_\_ for us,  
is \_\_\_\_\_ with us, and is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ for us through Jesus.

## Presents vs. Presence

*“Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret.” Mark 7:24*

Sometimes it’s a blessing to go unnoticed. Jesus knew the peace woven into the observatory silence of slipping through a crowd or standing at the back of a room. But though He was not an audience seeker, they followed and gathered by the droves to be in His presence.

“Emmanuel” explains how God came for us,  
is here with us,  
and is coming back for us through Jesus.

**“WHAT DOES IT MEAN?”**

*“He could not be hid; for, though a candle may be put under a bushel, the sun cannot.” Matthew Henry’s Commentary*



The celebratory countdown to Christmas isn't meant to

spotlight \_\_\_\_\_ generosity, but

\_\_\_\_\_.

When I feel hurried by my self-created hustle I linger a little longer in His presence ...which isn't a problem when you have no less than five Advent countdowns do maintain each day until Christmas. It's a *lot* much, you can think it. I know it. But, I love it. The best way to lose your Christmas spirit is to make it all about what were getting and giving.



\_\_\_\_\_

on the right " \_\_\_\_\_ "

ignites the Spirit of Christmas.

**present-** something presented. *-Merriam-Webster*

**presence-** the part of space within one's *immediate vicinity.* *-Merriam Webster*

How many Christmas presents do we forget about, exchange, or get rid of each year? Christ's presence is always applicable to our lives and within our lives ...if we'll only just open it. Emmanuel ...God with us.

## The Other Lego Girl

*“Briiiiiiiii!!!!!!”* my youngest wailed. *“You got a Lego Girl the last time you opened up a square ...that’s NOT FAIR!!!!”*

Watching my girls fight over an Advent gift I’d given them to share put the “never-enough” nature of humanity on display. In the thick of presents about to hit many homes; and the dread of those who don’t have gifts to give; it’s vital to pull the true light of Christmas into focus.

***“They will name him Immanuel (Hebrew for “God is with us”).” Matthew 1:23 (MSG)***

“The first of many” verses that connect the Old Testament with the new, the above in particular fulfilled a verse written approximately 800 years earlier! The treasures tucked inside these verses danced together the over eight centuries between them, until God whispered, **“it’s time.”** Somewhere around 740-680 BC, Isaiah, who’s name means means ***“the Lord saves”*** penned,

***“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”***  
***Isaiah 7:14 (NIV)***

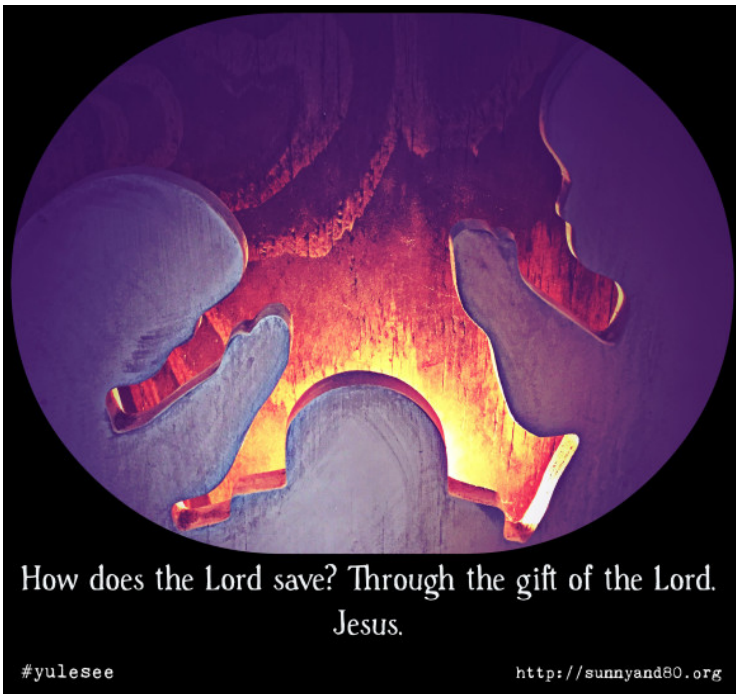


Matthew, who's name means "**gift of the Lord**," recorded his words within 50-70 AD:

*"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us")." Matthew 1:23 (NIV)*



\_\_\_\_\_ does the Lord save?  
\_\_\_\_\_ the gift  
of the Lord ...\_\_\_\_\_.



We're not always assured the final witness to inspired words, as a sign normally fulfilled within a few years taking 800 unravels the scope of God's timing. Isaiah's words warned the stubborn king Ahaz (the great-great-grandson of King Saul-*New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters*), but "*he would not ask a sign for the confirming of his faith because he resolved to persist in his unbelief, and would indulge his doubts and distrusts...*" *Matthew Henry Commentary*.

*"Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?" Luke 12:57*

Does it feel off-putting to revolve an entire season around hunting down doorbusters and toys your kid didn't even know existed before the catalog hit the mailbox? Beyond ancestral traditions and surrounding customs,



we must own our truth as \_\_\_\_\_

and \_\_\_\_\_ as the Creator of our soul observes.

**“Despite the insistence of the Pharisees, despite the Roman system and even despite the pressure of family, a person must accept God on his terms.” -NIV Study Bible Notes**

Is it just a story? Was He just a man? Our minds will remain elusively angst until we put down the proof and unlock our hearts. We're not so hidden away while we decide what to do. He sees because He is, and He is here now.



\_\_\_\_\_ don't fulfill human hearts;

souls are satisfied by the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus.

God's gift is ready to bless us upon opening. Grace waits because He knows us. Jesus is enough for all of us. Are you seeking Christ this Christmas? Simply let go and believe.

*He's already here.*

***Jesus.***

***Savior.***

***Emmanuel.***

Focus on the right "present"  
ignites the Spirit of Christmas.  
"WHAT DOES IT MEAN?"



Jesus, I believe.

Guide my first steps in faith.

Bless my life.

Guard my heart.

I embrace Your truth.

My Savior,  
You are here.

I am yours.

Amen.

#yulesee

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*“What Does It Mean?”*

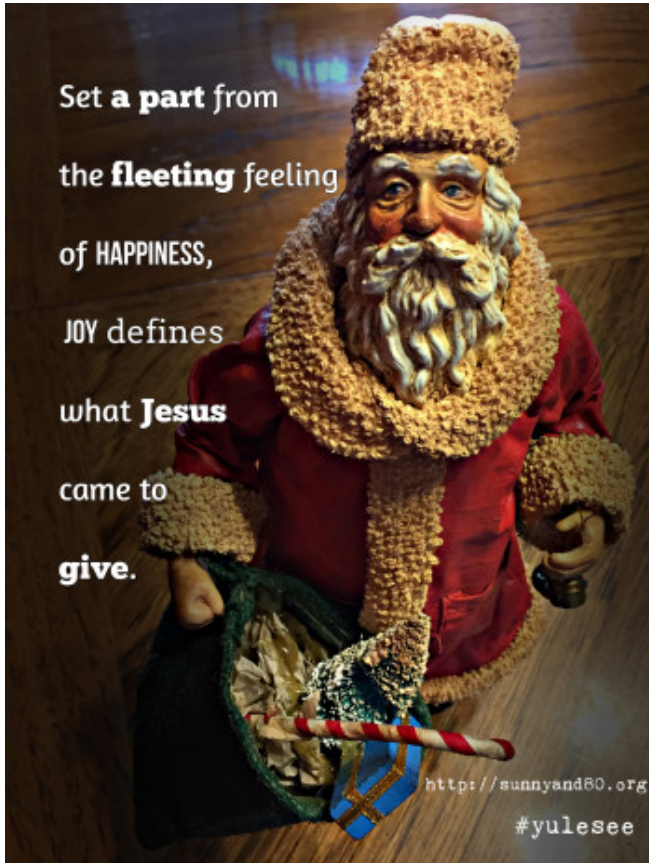
*Week 3:*

*Joy.*

PUBLISHED ON [December 19, 2016](#)



**Joy-** A source or cause of delight –*Merriam-Webster*



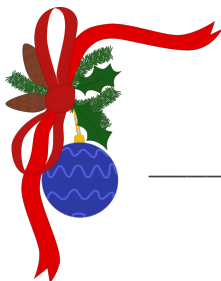
Is there greater delight than the wonder of Santa, or the glee witnessed as a child unwraps the present they wished for? Can there be a sweeter tear than the touch of a Christmas memory?

Yes.

*Joy **differs** from happiness in that it is an emotion. -Wikipedia*

**Set a part from the fleeting feeling of happiness, joy defines what Jesus came to give.** It's constancy flows through the entirety of our days, and allows us to laugh our way back to right. Joy is accepting who we are in confidence that we are cared for.

## Acceptance & The 'Damn' Centers



Joy is the \_\_\_\_\_ for who we

\_\_\_\_\_ by the One who made us.

*“Sarah said, ‘God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.’” Genesis 21:6*

She was ninety ...of course she laughed at the thought of giving birth. (*Genesis 18*) Yet as God promised, she and her 100-year old husband Abraham had a son named Isaac ...which means “he laughs.”



We often place God far off in the distance or high in the sky, but one of the endearing qualities of the Lord is that He is funny. I believe, in reverence, that Biblical

conversations reflect the humor of a God for whom nothing is impossible. How often are we able to make light of our circumstances?



Life isn't always \_\_\_\_\_,

but it **is** overflowing with \_\_\_\_\_

...if we choose to accept it.

My youngest daughter exudes joy unlike anyone else I've witnessed. It's hard to discipline her with a straight face. When I asked her one afternoon why she had to stay in for recess, she said:

“I had to finish my **damn** centers,” and rolled her eyes.

What else could I do but excuse myself to **die of laughter**? She's six! It further confirmed the spitfire personality that I love, along with the list of reasons she'll never be allowed to go on spring break...



“Lo” doesn’t fall in line or take adults too seriously. Her laugh is loud and ever-present. I may joke about her tendency to test the rules, but embrace the tender heart behind those twinkling blue eyes. My love for her allows me to witness the brightness of her light.

God is not surprised by us. He loves the complete creation. His love doesn’t lessen when we fall down. In fact, He seeks to share a laugh with us and reveal joy in hard moments. He’s accepted us. That’s why Jesus was born.



**We are made to journey in \_\_\_\_\_!**

**Christmas is \_\_\_\_\_ with God.**

## Confidence ...For the Birds



**Joy is the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.**

In the North where I live, Christmastime signals every bird that can’t bear the winter’s cold to start flocking together. Millions of birds dance together in the sky, instinctively gathering and swooping and soaring until they’ve accumulated enough of a mass to drift as a dark “bird cloud” away with the warm air.

***“...Look at them fly. It looks like God is taking pretty good care of them, doesn’t it? Remember that you are more precious to God than birds!” Luke 12:24***

Birds are not even in my top 100 of favorite ...or even likable creatures. Yet, over the years, I’ve come to admire the way they just know what to do.

***“...God cares for every little sparrow ...Since you are so much more precious to God than a thousand flocks of sparrows, and since God knows you in every detail—down to the number of hairs on your head at this moment—you can be secure and unafraid...” Luke 12:6-7***

Birds don’t realize they are small or incapable. They operate confidently on carefully designed instinct.

*“My little flock, don’t be afraid. God is your Father, and your Father’s great joy is to give you His kingdom.” Luke 12:32*

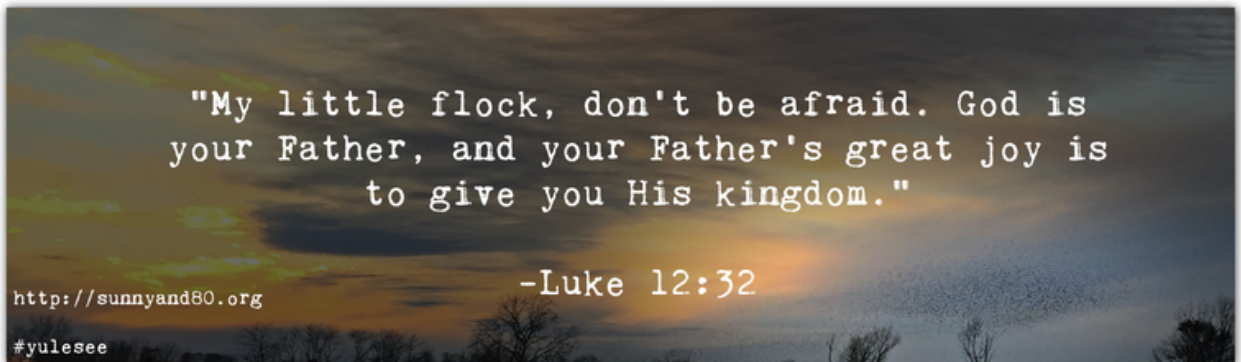


Humans \_\_\_\_\_ to be \_\_\_\_\_ because

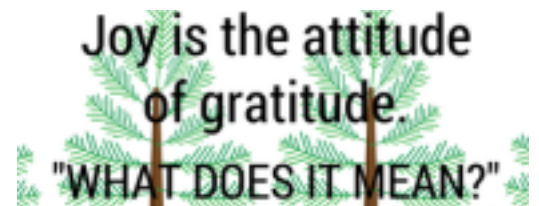
deep within the design of our nature \_\_\_\_\_ a

Creator who *is* \_\_\_\_\_.

Our confidence is found in Him, through Jesus.



He came into this world a small baby in a manger. His light caused others to flock to Him and follow Him, shifting and moving and gathering and cackling and spreading the Word. Long after Christ gave His human life on the cross, the birds continued to fly and stories of Jesus spread. His Word still flutters and gathers. Christian faith is moving and shifting. God’s not surprised. We all instinctively seek the joy of Jesus.



*“He is the light who reveals Your message to the other nations, \_\_\_\_\_ and He is the shining glory of Your covenant people, Israel.” Luke 2:32 (The Voice)*

**Joy** to the world, indeed.  
**The greatest gift.**



*“What Does It Mean?”*

*Week 4:*

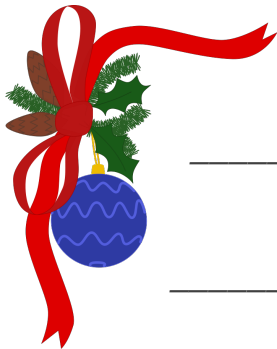
*Merry*

PUBLISHED ON [December 26, 2016](#)

**Merry-** *full of cheerfulness; joyous in disposition or spirit. 2. laughing happily; festively joyous; hilarious. (dictionary.com)*

**Queen Elizabeth II was said to prefer “Happy Christmas” at a time when “merry,” meant “intoxicated.” -Wikipedia**

The Queen was onto something, but I wouldn't have separated it. Let Christmas be associated with the feeling of intoxication, because that's an accurate reading of my Christmas-filled heart.



“Merry” is the \_\_\_\_\_ joy released by God's \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ out of His \_\_\_\_\_.

It's the boisterous laughter that seeps out in spite of exhaustion, and the confetti of cares launched free in celebration of the Light of life.

### Look Here.

Just in case the foul look on my daughter's face didn't communicate her disgust, she huffed around and away and out of the room. Infuriated that



she had swiped the last word, the furthest thing from my mind was forgiveness.

*“Here’s the point. God didn’t send His Son into the world to judge it; instead, He is here to rescue a world headed toward certain destruction.” John 3:17 (VOICE)*

God’s response to our tendency to walk around and run away was to forge a path to forgive us. His compassionate love is expressed through the Son who chose to endure humanity, knowing ahead of time that “Merry Christmas” would eventually become an intolerable offense.



God loves us for \_\_\_\_\_

...not who we \_\_\_\_\_ to be.

Jesus was born to restore our standing with His Father. Now that the danger of touching the hot stove has passed, I can begin to back down the maternal scream for safety in exchange for a listening ear and an understanding heart. A heart that isn’t offended by my daughter’s struggle to find herself in this world; but one that recognizes it’s plight, and looks for moments to guide, assure, and comfort her. Jesus erased my sins. Who am I to hold onto hers?

*“For God expressed His love for the world in this way: He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him will not face everlasting destruction, but will have everlasting life.” John 3:16 (VOICE)*

Everlasting life just for trusting Jesus with ours?

That’s a birthday worth celebrating in “merry” jubilee.

God’s response to our tendency  
to walk around and run away  
was to forge a path to forgive us.  
"WHAT DOES IT MEAN?"

## Treasure Your Sled

Christmas is like hopping on a sled and swishing down the hill, faster than we can brace for but worth hopping on. Blinded by stinging snow as we sail down the hill, the world's cold, cruel and political correct statutes are blurred by hope.

The joy of Jesus numbs the pain that tends to taint tears a bitter color if we remain of this world.



The constant \_\_\_\_\_ of self is \_\_\_\_\_ in the embrace of who we are right now.



Life isn't consistent or predictable.

Lean into the reliability of love, not actions, personalities, or unexplainable disasters. Our entire existence is a snap of God's fingertips.

***“Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.”***  
***Luke 12:21***

Christmas is the whole point of life.

It grants us the opportunity to have the relationship that Luke mentions above. Without that baby born in a manger, we are doomed to watch the sled zip by, never quick enough or smart enough or agile enough to catch it and hop on. Jesus holds it, waits for us to accept the ride, and then joins in as we scream with glee all the way down the hill ...of life.



## *“Merry”* Christmas.

It’s intoxicating ...Jesus being born to save the world.

It’s merry ...God and His love for us.

It’s endearing and inspiring ...to be forgiven beyond what we deserve.

It’s joy ...the opportunity we have to journey through life in closeness with our Creator.

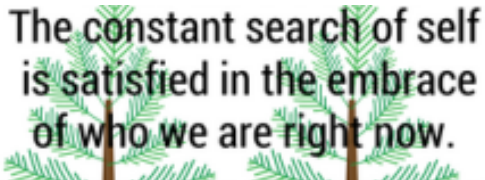
Be merry!

Shout with joy!

Embrace who YOU are ...right now!

Have FUN in this life, with your Savior by your side.

**The constant search of self  
is satisfied in the embrace  
of who we are right now.**

The text is overlaid on a decorative graphic of green pine branches with brown trunks, which are positioned behind the words "The constant search of self" and "is satisfied in the embrace".