

## Figuring Out Christmas

### **What You Won't Find On A Hallmark Card:**

Matthew 1:18-25 Psalm 32 Romans 3:23 Luke 2:10-14

The reason for the season is **sin**.

The purpose of Christmas was **Easter**...  
to get **rid of sin**.

The result of Christmas is a **relationship** with God,  
based on **forgiveness** and **freedom**.

### **Two Questions To Answer:**

John 3:16 John 15:1-17 1 John 1:9 Romans 8:1-2 1 Timothy 2:5-6

(1) Have I **accepted** Christmas?

(2) Am I **living it out** the other 11 months of the year?

### **The Inescapable Truth:**

John 14:6 Romans 10:9-13 Hebrews 9:27-28

Christmas always leaves us with a **decision to make**.

**Food for Thought for the week of December 10, 2017**  
(Questions and Scriptures for further study)

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1. We heard from Chris this weekend that the true meaning of Christmas is all about the forgiveness of our sin. Yet it can be a battle to be freed from the burden of past sins, or sins we find ourselves repeating. What do we learn from God's response to the confession of those sins in the passages below? What does it take to really own up to our own issues?

**Isaiah 1:11-17** *New International Version (NIV)*

<sup>11</sup> "The multitude of your sacrifices—  
what are they to me?" says the LORD.  
"I have more than enough of burnt offerings,  
of rams and the fat of fattened animals;  
I have no pleasure  
in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats."  
<sup>12</sup> When you come to appear before me,  
who has asked this of you,  
this trampling of my courts?  
<sup>13</sup> Stop bringing meaningless offerings!  
Your incense is detestable to me.  
New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—  
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.  
<sup>14</sup> Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals  
I hate with all my being.  
They have become a burden to me;  
I am weary of bearing them.  
<sup>15</sup> When you spread out your hands in prayer,  
I hide my eyes from you;  
even when you offer many prayers,  
I am not listening.  
Your hands are full of blood!  
<sup>16</sup> Wash and make yourselves clean.  
Take your evil deeds out of my sight;  
stop doing wrong.  
<sup>17</sup> Learn to do right; seek justice.  
Defend the oppressed.  
Take up the cause of the fatherless;  
plead the case of the widow.

**Amos 6:6-8** *New International Version (NIV)*

<sup>6</sup> You drink wine by the bowlful  
and use the finest lotions,  
but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph.  
<sup>7</sup> Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile;  
your feasting and lounging will end.  
*The LORD Abhors the Pride of Israel*  
<sup>8</sup> The Sovereign LORD has sworn by himself—the LORD God Almighty declares:  
"I abhor the pride of Jacob  
and detest his fortresses;  
I will deliver up the city  
and everything in it."

**Matthew 18:21-22** *New International Version (NIV)*

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

2. Continuing to walk in obedience can be challenging because each of us has a sin nature that encourages us to do things “our way” and not “God’s way.” We also have an enemy (the devil), who is called the “tempter,” whose ultimate goal is to get us to disobey God (see Genesis 3). In the following verses, what do you see that can help us consistently win this battle?

**1 Corinthians 10:12-13** *New International Version (NIV)*

<sup>12</sup> So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

**1 John 1:8-2:2** *New International Version (NIV)*

<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

<sup>2:1</sup> My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup> He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

3. Part of the process of unloading sin may mean you need to involve someone else and admit a wrong, ask for forgiveness or set up some type of accountability or safeguards to move in a positive direction. How do the following verses reference the possible need of involving others to help you make progress?

**Proverbs 28:13** *New International Version (NIV)*

<sup>13</sup> Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper,  
but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

**James 5:16** *New International Version (NIV)*

<sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

**Hebrews 10:24-25** *New International Version (NIV)*

<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

To prevent ourselves from giving in to our sinful desires, we need to set up safeguards and develop strategies. What safeguards or strategies have you seen others use at work, at home, or in their personal or social life to help them avoid temptation that might be helpful for you?