



2 CORINTHIANS 9:15

*Thanks
be unto
God
for his
unspeakable
gift.*

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Christmas Wishes 2025

When I first thought of the theme of Christmas wishes, I was sure we all have stories to remember of looking through the Sears Wish book that came out each fall and picking out toys that we could not live without. And then the joy when we got the present on Christmas morning.

Or maybe it was when we gave a Christmas gift to someone, where we spent a lot of time and effort picking out the perfect gift. And the joy and love that was expressed by the recipient.

But then there are those gifts that you received, and you are like geez thanks - this is not what I wanted, but it really was what you wanted, you just did not know it or understand it at the time.

This last scenario is not much different from the Israelites plight that first Christmas. Sure, they knew what they wanted—they wanted a leader, a warrior, someone to help them get out from under the Roman rule. A king. But what did God send them. A small baby, born in a stable, to an unwed couple. Not exactly what they wanted.

But the baby was so much more, and the stories of his birth were like no other. Angels sang in a multitude, awakening and calling the shepherds, A star so bright in the sky that wisemen travelled from afar. And the baby himself - was so much more than a king - he was God's son.

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Hope

Sunday, November 30

At its heart, a Christmas wish is a heartfelt message of hope, love, and goodwill. Similar to how Christmas itself is a message of hope for humanity. My heartfelt Christmas wish, this year for humanity, is:

Hope - for kindness instead of hate.

Love - for each other instead of fear.

Good will - that surpasses violence.

I wish this for all, no matter what we celebrate.

Whether it be Christmas, Hanukah, Ramadan or others. My Christmas wish is for true peace on earth, good will to mankind lasting beyond December 25th.

Prayer: Lord, we come to you on bended knee. Thankful for the Christ child that came when he was needed most. Hear our prayers, let your light shine down upon us and help us remember the true meaning of Christmas.

Phyllis Moss

It's been a while, but I remember the excitement on Christmas morning as a young boy. I don't recall much about wishing for certain gifts as much as I remember the wishing not to get certain gifts! Yes, there were things I picked out of the Sears Catalogue or the Montgomery Ward Catalogue or the JCPenney Catalogue and carefully folded over the corner of each page. You know, to make sure my wishes weren't overlooked!

Now, about those other, not so wanted gifts...socks, underwear and t-shirts. It seemed like every year after my father passed away, my grandparents gave me socks, underwear and t-shirts...EVERY YEAR. They also gave me something less utilitarian, but they took care of needs first and play second. The year we lost my father, the pharmacy down the street from my grandparents' house had a couple of drawings for Christmas. I'm not sure if my family stuffed the box or maybe the pharmacist, himself, but I won a sports set: baseball glove, baseball, baseball bat, football, and basketball. What a haul! It didn't make up for my father not being there, but it proved to be a good distraction.

Sometimes, we wish for "things" when we need to wish for something more, the company of family and friends. Hugs and handshakes, smiles and sparkling eyes, mean more than we imagine, until they are no more.

This Christmas, I hope for each of us to be surrounded by family and friends. I hope, too, that in the midst of the excitement, we have a moment to remember those who have left us. We can be grateful for their presence in our past even as we celebrate all who are with us. Oh, and we can still be grateful as we celebrate the thoughtful gifts we receive on Christmas; even those socks, underwear, and t-shirts!

Douglas Meister

Growing up in a small, rural town in western Kentucky, the Christmas season was always the happiest and most exciting time of the year for me. Regardless of what had happened during the first eleven months, the days between Thanksgiving and New Years always seemed to be different, almost magical. Our family was always excited when the season rolled around, and our excitement extended to our involvement with our family members, friends, church, school and the entire community. My memories (no doubt influenced by a healthy dose of nostalgia and the passage of time) conjure up a time when most everyone seemed to be in a good and generous mood, parents and teachers informally relaxed some of the rules and restrictions that were in effect during the rest of the year, and folks began to focus on kids (not only by giving gifts, but by planning activities, expressing interest in what we had to say, and generally spoiling us a bit).

As soon as we had finished watching the Macy's Parade, put away the harvest and Pilgrim props of Thanksgiving—and the turkey consumption had recycled from the formal bird and trimmings to turkey leftovers, to turkey sandwiches, and all the way down to—depending on your family—turkey soup or hash, the festive season launched into overdrive. There was a notable increase in family, church, school and community functions, and almost all of them were fun. They usually featured cookies, cakes, and candy (for us kids, the other “3Cs” of the season of Christ's birth!) In an act of both love and self-interest, Dr. Hindman and Dr. Bonasso—a Baptist and a Catholic and our local dentists—loved and supported that tradition!

Then, about a week before Christmas, school let out until after the New Year, and our attention shifted to the Big Question: Will I get that special gift? Our family could not afford big Christmases, but my sisters and I were very fortunate to have had the benefit of loving Santa's Helpers in our family. From the time we were in elementary school until we graduated from high school, we lived directly across the street from our grandmother. Our aunt (my grandmother's daughter and my mom's sister) and her husband had no children, but they visited Granny each year at Christmas. Every year, they drove into town on Christmas Eve in a car loaded down with presents—many of which were for me and my sisters. Their love and loyalty made many a Christmas very special!

As an adult, each year as Thanksgiving has rolled around, I have promised myself that THIS IS THE YEAR I will slow down and be intentional about recreating the same unique excitement and joy of the Christmas season that I felt as a child. It never works! Try as I might, I end up rushing around doing things I think I have to do and never quite focusing on the magic of the season I felt as a child. Then, Christmas Day comes and goes without my having relaxed and enjoyed the nostalgia and traditions of the season or spent time helping someone else make fond Christmas memories of their own. I seem to repeat the same mistakes every year:

- I let less important things—things I “have to get done before Christmas”—keep me from spending quiet afternoons with friends and family—or just myself—contemplating Christ's birth and what it should mean to our values and how we live our lives.
- I fail to spend time connecting with people whose memories of the season may not be as positive as mine, and I miss opportunities to learn from them and to reflect on a more modern (and perhaps less selfish) meaning of the Christmas season.
- I somehow never get around to telling people in my life how much I love and appreciate them and how much they mean to me, which is the real message I should have taken from my own relatively happy childhood Christmas experiences.

All of this is a problem! I hope you are more successful in celebrating and recreating your special Christmas traditions. I'm confident I will do better next year. Anyone want to join me in a New Years Resolution? That should work. I've always been so successful at keeping those!

Merry Christmas!

Sam DeShazer

After a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner with my family in 1975, I left Seattle to serve in the Army overseas. I was excited about it but really had no idea what was to come.

After a full day riding an old Army bus, I was let off at a base that dark, snowy night. No one knew where I was to report, or what barracks I would be in, so when someone said, “there are empty beds on the 4th floor”. I lugged my belongings to the top floor and slept in a big, cold open bay with 20 beds... I was the only one there. I felt lost and alone.

The next day I was assigned to another base. It was a smaller base, and there were only 6 other women assigned there. Again, lost and alone, and now somewhat frightened to wander about.

When Christmastime arrived, all I wanted was to be with my family. Since I knew that couldn't happen, my wish was that I could at least talk with my parents on Christmas. It was not easy to make international phone calls at the time, and I knew there was little hope of getting through to them.

No, I didn't get through to them on Christmas.... But there was a Base Christmas party that I decided to attend. Almost everyone turned out... there was singing and gifts, and lots of cheer. I met some people at that gathering that would become lifelong friends. I still look back at that Christmas as one of my very favorite!

Sometimes we make wishes for what we think we need, but God gifts us with something even more meaningful. God's plan for us is often revealed just as we are giving up hope!

Mary Borders

*“But those who hope on the Lord shall renew their strength,
They will soar on wings like eagles,
They shall run and not grow weary,
They shall walk and not be faint.”* **Isaiah 40:31**

I sometimes think of and quote this verse as I am many miles into a race, with many more to go and feel like quitting. Reflecting on this, I realize that our daily lives can feel much like a race. We run from one task to the next, juggling work, family, school, and personal struggles. At times, we grow weary—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But Isaiah reminds me of what I believe to be a powerful truth, **our strength doesn't come from within—it comes from God, and we need to lean into this belief.**

Maybe today you feel tired. Maybe you're facing something that seems too big for you. The promise of Isaiah 40:31 is for you. **Hope is in the Lord.** Trust Him. Let Him renew your strength.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for being our strength when we are weak. Teach us to wait on You with faith and patience. Renew our hearts today. Help us to run and not grow weary, to walk and not be faint. May we soar like eagles, not by our own power, but by Yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

David Duke

I have always loved Christmas time! I can't remember any of my past wishes or gifts, perhaps because those have never been the focus for me. The celebration of Christmas has always been more about keeping traditions and being with family.

As a child and teen, there was excitement in the air as we prepared for the anticipated day. It often began with picking out the perfect scotch pine tree, taking it home and decorating it with special ornaments and tinsel gently placed one at a time. It was shopping with our mom, helping with food preparations, listening to carols, taking drives in the car to see the lights & decorations, and attending Mass that added to the holiday.

Over the years, our preparations and many of our traditions have changed. We added the tradition of giving back in some way by adopting a family from JAM or shopping for a child from the Angel Tree. We no longer have a real tree, but Larry and I enjoy decorating our artificial tree as we reminisce about our favorite ornaments. Much of my shopping has shifted to online purchases and I have reduced the amount of baking I do. We miss the tradition of having our kids home to help with the decorating. The Christmas Eve service at JCC continues to be a tradition that reminds me of the true meaning of Christmas.

After 2020, when the COVID virus was in full swing, the excitement of Christmas changed. My father died in November of that year, so I was not looking forward to that Christmas. It was difficult to get into the spirit as we navigated a new reality. To help with the depression, we began new traditions with our grandkids which we continue today. I am reminded that life does not stay the same, but we can still find joy in the season.

My wish for each of us, as we prepare for Christmas 2025, is that we find a way to share the joy that comes with the birth of the Christ child. It may be through a simple act of kindness extended to a stranger or visiting someone who is alone. Be joyful!

Dear God,

Sometimes life can be so overwhelming, especially during the holidays. Renew our spirits that may find joy as we remember and anticipate the birth of Jesus. Amen.

Kim Nalley

A Walking doll, a Bike, a Sleeping Bag, an Engagement ring, safe travels, a roof over my head are all Christmas Wishes I have had over time. From the simple wishes of a little girl to the wishes of a young woman to the wishes of a scared grandmother, changes in our lives show in what we wish for.

Underneath all these wishes is a central idea and that is Hope. We hope that someone is listening and will make our wishes come true. Many times, our wishes do come true. Some are granted out of love by a parent or grandparent. Sometimes another family member or friend steps up.

As we get older, many of our wishes are really prayers of hope for safety, comfort, salvation. I know God listens to our prayers, our wishes. I know prayers of hope are answered. Christmas wishes do come true.

Linda Overfield

Christmas Wishes of the Past: Luke 2:14 (KJV) “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN”.

Coming directly from the heavenly source this could be more of an instruction than a wish. The first proclamation of Christ’s arrival includes the impact that he brings to the world. God blessed us with the free will to listen or ignore these words. Giving us control of the outcome makes it a wish by God. A deity that puts our fate in our hands and wishes that we accept the instruction.

For 2000+ years we have succeeded and failed many times in our efforts to provide “good will toward all”. Fits and starts, wars and mission trips, cries of pain and exaltation mark each decade through the centuries since the angels sang.

God’s wish for us remains

Christmas Wishes of the Present: “Peace on earth, GOOD WILL TOWARD ALL”

Social media, UGH! 24-hour news channels, UGH! Algorithms that feed our desires and fears, UGH! Well at least it is only words and not bullets. Except when it is bullets.

Kentucky songwriter Tyler Childers mentions in his song Creeker “And for e’ryone ya meet there’s a whole mess of people, Tryin’ like hell to pull you on down’ To the level they’re on and the trouble they’re tendin’, In the mess that they’ve made in the gutter they found”. But maybe I am the people, I am pulling down, we are tending the trouble, we found the messy gutter. All while those social sources in our echo chambers confirm that we are in the right. Fighting the good fight?

It is easy to lose focus on the wish. GOOD WILL TOWARD ALL.

Jack Kornfield, the meditation instructor, is credited with the paraphrased statement: “tend the garden that you can touch”.

Step one of my present-day Christmas wish is that I, and maybe others reading this devotional, will exude a presence of good will toward all people that I have the ability to touch.

Christmas Wishes of the Future: “Peace on earth, GOOD WILL TOWARD ALL”

God has big plans; as God should. Peace on Earth seems so unattainable. I am doubtful I can achieve it; I would bet that you can’t either. But I can spread good will. I can stop tending trouble, I can step out of the gutter. WE CAN SPREAD GOOD WILL TO ALL. Maybe the garden I tend will touch the garden you tend and so on and so on. Then my grandchildren can live in a world that sees peace on earth.

Merry Christmas to ALL!

Chris Reece

Over the years I had many Christmas wishes. From hoping to get the toy that I wanted to wishing to get pregnant after years of trying, to praying that a loved one lives through another Christmas. But one Christmas wish that I wish for every year is that I hope it snows on Christmas. Whether it snows at 12:01 am Christmas morning or 9:00 pm Christmas evening is my Christmas wish.

A few years ago, after attending our midnight Christmas Eve service, I drove out of the church parking lot on a quiet night with not many people on the roads. It started to snow. I couldn't believe it. This was the PERFECT time to snow. I saw snowflakes in the streetlights above and through my headlights in front of me. Snowflakes were flying in the air and lightly touching my windshield. It put me in a place to reflect on why we celebrate Christmas. It was just so peaceful.

Over the years, it has snowed several times on Christmas Day. When I was a child, I remember my cousin, Michael, and my Aunt Beverly visiting from Florida. My cousin was wishing it would snow since they do not have much snow in Florida, if at all where they were living. Guess what, it snowed during their Christmas visit to Kentucky. I remember his excitement and wanting to go outside to feel it and touch it.

If it doesn't snow this Christmas, it will be OK. I can reflect on past years or anticipate snowing next year. As John 14:27 writes: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Lisa Pataluna

One year for Christmas Paul got a red metal fire truck with a long extension ladder. It was played with and enjoyed for a few years.

His mother put it away until one year she gave it to Paul and Lynda saying, “a grandson would enjoy playing with this.” A few years later she had a granddaughter who did not want to play with a red metal fire truck with a long extension ladder!

Several years later a great grandson arrived. He discovered the red metal fire truck with the extension ladder. “Woo Woo” (his word for it). He loves trucks, especially fire trucks. Pop told him he would get it repaired for him to play with like Pop did. Our grandson is happily waiting for it.

We never know that we had as a child will bring joy to a new generation. Advent each year is a new and joyous experience.

HOPE PEACE JOY LOVE

Let us prepare our hearts and minds to experience Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love this Advent season and share it with our families, friends and those we encounter. Spread the love.

Paul and Lynda Hardesty

A few years before my mother passed away, she came to my room on Christmas Morning and started the morning with the following conversation “Do you remember growing up, on Christmas when all of the cousins and everyone would come to the house, and it was so full of activity?” I immediately realized that my mom was confusing her childhood with mine. Sure, I remembered Christmas’s growing up with the family, but our Christmas celebrations were our family of 4, maybe with some friends for dinner. But mom was remembering when she grew up in a family of 12 children and cousins were nearby and her brothers and sisters came home for Christmas. I knew the large Christmas celebrations that Mom was remembering, but they were never on Christmas morn.

Fast forward several years to 2021. Christmas was looking so hopeful in November. The Children at the church were going to do a musical (After Covid this was something to be excited about) and we were resuming our Advent Decorating tradition after church. I remember eating lunch with my mom and others and Mom commenting on how great it was to be back in church (even if there was no heat) and to be together.

And then things went in another direction. Mom fell later that day and spent the next month in the hospital and rehab, finally passing on Christmas morning. It was a bummer of way to spend Christmas, but I kept saying that Mom just wanted to be in heaven to great Baby Jesus - and I am sure she did.

A year or two later, my cousins were cleaning out pictures from their parents’ stuff and giving them to people who were in them. I got a picture of my mom hugging one of her sisters on her 60th birthday. We had had a surprise party for my mom, and her sister had flown in from Phoenix. It was a candid shot, people were chopped off, my mom and her sister both had their eyes shut and were crying, but the joy in the picture is undeniable.

I have that picture on my dresser, and when I see it I do not see Mom’s 60th birthday anymore, but I see that Christmas morn when mom got her wish and she got her big Christmas in heaven, and it gives me peace. Someday we too will join the celebration in heaven, all because God sent his son to Earth to save us.

Mary Duttlinger

Peace

Thursday, December 11

I do recall as a little girl my wish list for Christmas started early because My mom and dad received the JCPenney and Sears catalogs in the mail. My sister and I would go over those pages, circling all the things that we thought we needed or wanted for Christmas. That was probably my first recollection of a Wish!

Now as I'm thinking about it very carefully, I am having a hard time, determining the difference between wishing for something or hoping for something.

There are a million things I could wish for, or things I wish I had done differently or made different choices in my life. But as an adult, I feel that many of my wishes have been granted or have come true. Now, looking towards the future I wish for myself, good health and happiness, and that's what I wish for my family and friends.

Leeanne Neuman

My Christmas wish every year is to have snow on Christmas. I love snow! It sometimes cancels school and the activities when the snows are endless. Every year there has been snow, I go outside with my sister, and we try and make a snowman and of course I pull her on a sled down the hill down the side of our house. It's always something to anticipate and never falls the same. Ever since watching White Christmas for the first time, I've always had hope for snow on Christmas!

Hannah McFarland

Christmas on the Creek at Mom and Dad's was always fun. We usually played competitive games and had great conversations at the kitchen table while listening to my older brothers spin tales about their youthful escapades and how cool they were in high school. It was always a good time with lots of laughter, nonsense, and love.

In 2010, Dad unexpectedly passed away and then my brother Mike followed that same year, it left a huge, empty hole in our gatherings. Holidays were tough as each member tried to negotiate grief on their own. It's like the air had been let out of the room and joy didn't come easy. It was a battle to get together but attempt to NOT talk about *anything* that would make Momma cry but, in doing so it created a deeper sadness- like we were trying to forget them.

Every story we had was connected to Dad and Mike in some way. So, conversations came to a lull because tears were too close, and no one wanted to get emotional in front of each other at a family dinner.

Thanksgiving that year proved to be hard too. Nothing much to say, a lot of silent eating, and everyone in a hurry to get home after cleaning up

In December, I attended an Art conference for work and had the assignment of "Exploring Poetry for Everyday People" for my high school class. I was not excited to say the least. Poetry writing was not my jam. The workshop was about using personal ordinary objects, places, and traditions in the style of author George Ella Lyons' poem entitled "I Am From". It was fun! Compelling! I shared it with my little Momma and she and I sat at the kitchen table laughing and writing our own but didn't get them finished. My wheels were turning, and I had an idea.

I called each sibling and asked them, their spouses and their children to write a poem to share at our next gathering for Momma. Behind the scenes it was interesting to watch others write poetry for the first time!! I had to give lots of encouragement and reassurance. This made everyone feel vulnerable writing about personally significant things that were special to them.

Christmas started out much like Thanksgiving but after the meal and the presents were opened, all 22 of us sat around the tiny living room and each took turns reading their poems to Momma. Some were funny and created the laughter I missed so much. Others were somber and mentioned some hard things they had endured. And others were just reminiscing about old toys, games and other childhood nostalgia. Of course, my brothers wrote about how cool they were in high school! But we were talking and laughing again!! We talked about Dad and Mike too. Some of the remembering made us cry but it felt ok because we were doing it together.

Reflecting back, it's beautiful how Jesus reminds us we were meant for community and relationships. All too often when things get hard, we isolate and refuse to let anyone help us. The hard lesson is that grief and healing come faster when you work through it together even when you'd rather do the "ugly cry" alone.

"It's not the load that weighs you down, it's the way you carry it." C. S. Lewis

Donna Schmidt

Joy

Sunday, December 14

Every Christmas, I find myself reflecting on what I truly wish for—not just the gifts that can be wrapped and placed beneath a tree, but the deeper longings of the heart. As a child, my wishes were simple: toys, snow, laughter. As the years passed, they grew more complex: health for loved ones, peace in times of turmoil, hope that endures when joy feels out of reach.

But this year, my wish feels different. I find myself longing for a faith that matches the moment in which we are living—a faith as brave and trusting as that of our spiritual ancestors.

The story of Mary and the angel Gabriel, recorded in Luke 1, is one of the most extraordinary scenes in all of Scripture. Gabriel arrives with astonishing news: Mary will bear the Son of God. The moment shimmers with wonder and suspense—heaven itself leaning forward to hear her reply. All of creation holds its breath, waiting for her response. And then, in the quiet courage of faith, Mary speaks words that change everything: “Here I am, the servant of the Lord.”

That simple yes captures the heart of Christmas. God takes a risk—entrusting divine love to human hands, vulnerability to human care. And Mary takes a risk too—choosing to believe that her small, fragile yes can help bring good news to the world. In her attentiveness and courage, we glimpse the pattern for our own lives of faith.

This Christmas, I want to listen as Mary listened—to be attentive to God’s voice even amid the noise and distraction. I want to trust, as she did, that the impossible may yet unfold through ordinary lives. I want to be brave enough to say yes—to kindness, to reconciliation, to the work of hope.

For the past, I give thanks. For the present, I open my heart. For the future, I say yes. And as we gather around the manger once more, may love be born again in us and through us—for the sake of a weary world still waiting for good news.

Pastor Lee

“Come in!” exclaimed the Ghost. “Come in! and know me better, man!” Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been and, though the Spirit’s eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them. “I am the Ghost of Christmas Present,” said the Spirit. “Look upon me!”

Charles Dickens. A Christmas Carol

“Come in! and know me better, man!” So said the third of Ebenezer’s nightly visitors. The proclamation came after spooky, doorknocker, chain dragging Marley and the Ghost of Christmas Past’s revelations of the poor choices of previous Christmases. Here was a genial faced, sparkling eyed, and cheery voiced spirit surrounded by greenery and holiday treats.

“You have never seen the like of me before!” exclaimed the Spirit.

We all can find reasons to approach this coming Christmas not as our “dogged” self, timidly hanging our head. To not want to meet it eye-to-eye. We have our past ghosts, our missed opportunities to celebrate the birth of the Christ child.

Dickens introduces us to a Spirit that tells us to set that all aside. Celebrate! Celebrate today and throughout the season. This Christmas is not like the ones in the past or the future. Find the joy in this year’s holiday. Play silly games with family.

So, let’s look upon him and “know him better, man!” A couple details that don’t often make the movie versions. The spirit carried a torch into the street and used it to sprinkle incense on the food carried by folks leaving the bakery. Good humor was the result of the added flavoring. When Scrooge questions the Spirit, he discovered the magic was added to all dinners kindly given, and to the poor one most. Why the poor the most? “Because it needs it most”

And a second often missed detail is the antique scabbard girdled around his lavish robes. Described as an ancient sheath eaten up by rust. And missing a sword.

Let us mimic this phantom that Mr. Dickens provides. Let us spread our joy to all that we meet. Let us make special effort for those poor. Poor in actual means of food and shelter. Or poor in strength, or hope, or faith due to their current pressures.

Let us set down our weapons, physical and emotional, and let the part of us that carries them rust over.

Let us know this Christmas better! We have never seen the like of it before!

And in our best Tiny Tim voice “God bless us, Everyone!”

Chris Reece

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and the door will be opened to you.
Matthew 7:7

Pray continually.

Thessalonians 5:17

I heard Matthew 7:7 at an early age and immediately knew that things did not always work that way. My Christmas Wish from the time I was 4 or 5 until I was 12 or 13 was for a baby brother or sister. I hated being an only child and truthfully, I still do. I begged my parents endlessly for a sibling but I said it so many times that I was just told I was meant to be an only child.... grrrr, I hated that answer.

I grew up in a world of adults, cousins on my mother's side were old enough to be my parents and I lived far away from their children. On my father's side I had bountiful numbers of cousins, but they were all in Catholic Schools, doing their Catechism, we had absolutely nothing in common, and we seldom saw them. I was (and still am) precocious, inquisitive and liked to talk way too much (still do), and I soon morphed into Margaret Mitchell from Dennis the Menace. Yes, I had sausage curls, cat eyeglasses and dropped waist dresses. I was around other children so rarely that I really had no idea how to even play but I was sure a baby brother/sister would be the perfect answer.

The Christmas I was 10, Daddy went into the hospital on the first of December with a burst appendix. Much to my mother's chagrin, I was ecstatic. I was not happy he was ill and hurting but what a perfect opportunity for him to pick me up a baby brother/sister, 'cause everyone knew the hospital is where babies come from. One more time my Christmas Wish did not come true.

I begged my parents to adopt a baby. Then I heard a TV report talking about "baby markets" and children being sold. But both options were extremely expensive and even though I offered to give up my allowance it was a no go.

Grudgingly I learned to live with being an only child and got on with the business of growing up. But still, whenever we went out shopping or for dinner I would look longingly at families with several children.

Fast forward to me having two wonderful children of my own, even after being told I could never have children. My mother was told the same thing. My mother and I did not like being told we could not do something we passionately wanted to do. The girls were growing, and we were getting active in our local church. We still have several friends we keep up with from there. Then God led me to Jeffersontown and as I became active, learned everyone's name and lineage.....that took way too long, I discovered that I did ask, I sought, I knocked and I not only prayed, I bugged God about wanting a BIG family. And a couple years after joining Jeffersontown, I looked around, really looked around and realized that I was finally living my most precious Christmas Wish of all. It was all in God's time, not my time. I finally had my big, wonderful, noisy, playful, sometimes a little dysfunctional, active, giving, loving family. My wish came a bit later than I would have liked but all of you were so worth the wait and so exceeded my expectations.

Merry Christmas!

Love you one and all...!

Diana Polsgrove

Last year I really wanted new shoes for Christmas. I was so excited to get new shoes for Christmas. It was sad that I didn't get the new shoes I wanted but I got so many other things that I wanted but I was so grateful that I got so many other things that I really wanted. My sister and I were opening our last gifts but then my parents said, "I think there is supposed to be one more gift for you, Aubrey".

So, I looked under the tree and there was a tiny box. I thought to myself, "What could possibly fit in this tiny box?" I opened it and I was so surprised! It was air pods and I was so shocked. I looked up and started crying. I ran to my mom and dad, still crying because I was so surprised and thankful that I got air pods. When I opened that box I totally forgot about the shoes I wanted. Last year was the BEST CHRISTMAS EVER!

Aubrey McFarland

The writer of Corinthians states in Chapter 13 verse 11 “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.” With my apologies, I will add that I wished like a child. When I was a child, I wished for material things: a Miss Revlon doll, and later a Barbie; a bicycle or some shiny new object and/or a cuddly stuffed monkey that I wrapped around my waist and neck to carry like a baby.

Things shifted when I turned ten. That Christmas my sister was gone. She and her boyfriend ran away. Thankfully, on Christmas Day we knew they were safe and were to return home that next week. But Christmas was subdued. Going forward from that Christmas, I am not certain what my wishes became. To this day when I am asked what I want for Christmas, I stumble and mumble. I cannot name a thing. It is not that I have no wants. It is the realization that even when I receive my exact wish, the empty feeling remains. Wishes granted do not provide.

And yet the gift giving continues. Only now I find myself wishing to give the perfect gift to friends and family. Is this a wish to secure my place in their hearts and minds? The giving becomes gift wrapped in the ego. So maybe the better Christmas wish for now and in the future is to forget about the material things and to look to whatever gives hope, peace, joy and love.

Becky Greenlee

By definition a tradition is a system of beliefs or behaviors passed down within a group of people or society with symbolic meaning or special significance.

Growing up in our family, it was tradition to go to church on Christmas Eve and celebrate the opening of gifts on Christmas morning. Looking back, it is hard to remember when we did not celebrate Christmas this way. And Christmas morning always came early. Even if my memories are not correct, there are plenty of photos with my mom's eyes half open. I know that her Christmas wish that year would have been for another hour's sleep.

Then there was the Christmas my parents decided to get that extra hour of sleep. I believe that my brother and I were in the 3rd and 5th grade, respectively. That year my parents arranged for neighbors to leave Christmas on the front porch on Christmas Eve when we returned from church, rather than around the tree on Christmas morning.

Looking back I can see it now - opening the door and seeing these big sacks of gifts (we got bean bag chairs that year) and then my brother and I agreeing on one thing - it was *NOT* Christmas and we were not opening the gifts. Mom and Dad tried to convince us that we could open the gifts tonight and sleep in on Christmas. I remember a lot of tears and promises to not get up before 8 am. And in the end the tradition stood - gifts were opened on Christmas morning - with a new twist not before 8 o'clock.

Many things have changed over the years, but celebrating the joy of our Savior's birth with family and friends is something that I always wish for. May you find joy this Christmas season in sharing in Christ's birth - whether it be Christmas Eve or Christmas Morn - or both!

Mary Duttlinger

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Thessalonians 3:9-13 NRSV

During the holiday season, we think about others with whom we only exchange Christmas cards. We think about the poor. We think about who we want to buy gifts for and what to get them.

What if we focused on others more than just once a year? What if we sent Valentines or Easter cards? What if we gave gifts randomly, just because? We can give thanks for each other year-round, but it is this time of the year, that we often take stock and count our blessings.

Prayer: Thank you, God for the many blessings you give me, and help to notice and appreciate each one.

By Reverend McDonald, submitted by Michelle Thomason

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. 1 JOHN 5:1

I was raised by my father in a single parent household. I'm sure money was tight raising three children, but I never went without. Every Christmas, my father would ask us what we wanted. It was usually one big gift for each one of us. One Christmas, I wanted a stereo system. We went shopping at Sears, and I found THE one! It had two large speakers on each side which were over 2 1/2 feet tall with a stereo system in the middle - AM/FM radio, two tape decks, and a record player on top with record and tape storage below. The whole thing was over 3 feet wide. It had lots of buttons, knobs and a digital display. The only problem was my father told me it cost too much. I was sad and disappointed.

That same stereo system that I had to have which cost too much ended up "under the tree" that Christmas. I will always remember how excited, surprised and thankful I was that year. I still have that stereo system with those two enormous speakers with all the bells and whistles and do listen to it from time to time. I even let my father borrow it for several years when I was short on room where I was living at the time so he could listen to records in his family room.

I tend to write devotionals that mention my father every year, but he is my hero. He sacrificed a lot, raising three children on his own. I hope he knows how much he means to me and the family and how much he is loved and needed.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for my parents. For the parents who are still with us on earth, please keep them healthy and safe and may they feel honored, cherished and loved. Amen.

Anna Norris

“Who Left the Bible Open?” by Rick Loader 1990, 1996

*The Holy Book, it's just for looks
 And it's sittin' pretty in a table nook.
 Genu-ine leather, it looks all right.
 And the cover's closed, so no one knows
 What the word of God may show,
 And some say what we don't know won't bite.*

*Easy to read with a family tree
 And a golden edge on every leaf,
 The words of Jesus Christ are red on white.
 Take my word, it's true.
 It's got a bookmark too,
 The Holy Book, it's as good as new,
 So, who left the Bible open last night?*

*Who left the Bible open? Who left the Bible open? Who left the Bible open last night?
 Oh, oh!
 Who left the Bible open? Who left the Bible open? Who left the Bible open last night?*

Some young mothers asked me about what Bible they should have for their children. I was not pleased that a typical Children's Bible passed on traditions that weren't biblical.

- For instance, unlike nativity scenes, the Wise Men did not go to the manger; Jesus was in a house by then (Matthew 2.9-11).
- Another misconception: the Wise Men didn't just follow the star to Bethlehem. They used the Scriptures (Matthew 2.4-6). Herod's chief priests and scribes said Micah 5.2 and 2 Samuel 5.2 said the ruler would come from Bethlehem. **SCRIPTURE.** That notwithstanding, the star did stop at the very house where Jesus was (imagine that).
- Even the Christmas carol “Away in a Manger” is misleading. Who says, “the little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes”? Scripture doesn't. William J. Kirkpatrick, he said it. He must not have liked crying babies in church or maybe he was just trying to create a peaceful scene. But it was not biblical. (When I was preaching at Crofton and Mayfield, where only rarely a child came to church, I loved it when I heard a crying baby. It's the way children struggle to express their need of God.)

I don't know what all you want for Christmas this year. Let me suggest we ask for a little free time to read our Bibles.

Scriptures around the birth of Jesus are in Matthew 1 - 2 and Luke 1 - 2. You will find it talks about people just like you, people struggling as we do, to follow Jesus.

Those mothers who wanted to know what Bible they should get for their children, I told them, “the best Bible was the Bible that is read to them by their parents.” When children understood the love the parents had for the Bible, they would develop a love for the Scriptures.

*Who left the Bible open in our homes?
 Maybe we did.*

When thinking of a Christmas wish. It brings to mind the story of the wise men. As they traveled from the East to Bethlehem, guided by a star, to find and worship the newborn King of the Jews.

I like to imagine that star was a wishing star for them. It was a bright shining light that their wishes, hopes and dreams were invested in each night as they traveled. It reminds me of how sometimes I make a wish on the first star at night. And when I see it, I quietly recite a rhyme from my childhood, "Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight. Wish I may, wish I might, have the wish I wish tonight."

The wise men probably didn't have a child's rhyme. I'm actually pretty sure they didn't. But I imagine they saw that star and made some of the first Christmas wishes. They wished for guidance from their God. They wished that the star would lead them to the messiah. But theirs was more than a wish on a star. Theirs was hope, faith and trust in God and the prophecy. Their faith was more than a wish that they "hoped" would come true. It was a certainty that the star would lead them, to what we now call the "reason for the season"

So, if you happen to be outside on Christmas Eve and you look up to see the first star, make a Christmas wish. My wish is for peace. That covers a lot of issues in our lives right now. But I'm not going to hope my wish comes true. I'm going to have faith, like the wise men. I believe God's got this!!!! I have faith!! May God bless you and keep you during this Christmas season and may your Christmas wishes come true.

Phyllis Moss

Christmas wishes? Past, present or future? I am not sure if this would be considered a wish, but I am going to share a very meaningful Christmas morning with you.

I grew up an only child and when I got married, I wanted a family. Husband, children, dogs and cats to start with. Biological children were not meant to be, but in 1999 we became foster parents to 2 teenage boys. As the years passed, they became a permanent part of our family. We realized they were not going to be reunified with their biological families, and they were ok with that. Adoption would have been difficult because neither set of parents had given up their parental rights. We were family and didn't need adoption papers to seal the deal.

As both boys neared their 18th birthday, we were contacted by Home of the Innocents to foster a brother and a sister. They were also teenagers. We met them and all of us decided to give it a go. I was certain that they would be reunified with their mother but was I wrong! They moved into our family in April 2002. Our older boys, Chuck and Gerrad, helped them find their way at their new school. Kim was quiet and loved Harry Potter, and Albert wanted to be outgoing but had some emotional and developmental issues.

By December, we were aware that they would be staying with us and not going home with their mother. We bought Christmas gifts for each member of our family, but being part of a family is what they wished for most. Christmas morning was chaotic! I had never experienced anything like 4 teenagers opening presents as if they still believed in Santa Claus. After breakfast, David retired to his recliner. All 4 teenagers gathered around his recliner to make sure he did not get a Christmas morning nap. I snapped a photo of them smiling, as if to say this is home and we are glad to be here. I realized my Christmas wish had been granted too! An unconscious wish made many years ago.

I know God was with David and me every step of the way. Only divine intervention could make the wishes of 6 people come true in an old farmhouse on Christmas morning.

Tomme Clark

Family is everything.

Every Christmas season, I wish for material items: a new scooter, a puzzle, perfume, money, etc. Every season, I generally receive what I ask for. But I always find myself gradually losing joy in the thing I once believed would bring me the most of it. I grow out of the scooter, finish the puzzle, get bored with the perfume, and spend the money.

As I grow up, I realize that it is not the gifts that make Christmas so magical. It's not the shortbread cookies I eat until my stomach hurts. It's also not the annual holiday music I proudly sing along to.

The Christmas magic I believe in is not really magic at all. It's the love I feel from my family. I feel it when I receive a thoughtful gift from my parents. When I bake alongside my Nanny, giggling together when flour falls all over the floor, I feel it then, too. While singing along to Have A Holly Jolly Christmas in the car with my younger sisters, not caring who listens, the Christmas "magic" consumes me, warming my heart, even in the coldest of winters.

My ultimate Christmas wish for the future is to never let go of what brings me the most joy, and that's my family.

Kadence Pataluna

I had a blessed childhood, and Christmas was full of joy, wonder, and surprise. Growing up as a child of the 80's, the beginning of the Christmas season was marked by the arrival of the JC Penney catalog. That giant book with bright slick pages just full of amazing images of all the best and newest toys. Next came the exaggerated commercials with enactments of all the things these spectacular toys "could" do - light up, talk, move, perform in some way, and even save the day when called upon to do so (I'm looking at you GI Joe..). I gave careful consideration to my choices, after seeing the commercials and consulting with my friends, and made the tell-tale decision by circling the item in thick black ink!

One year, in particular, for me was the year of the Easy Bake Oven. I mean, seriously(!), it was an oven for a child. I was overwhelmed with the ideas of the things I could make - cakes, cupcakes - the possibilities were endless. I needed this in my life. Christmas came and went. It was magical. Wrapping paper thrown in the air, bows disassembled, tinsel all around. Happiness abounds, time passes, and I realize no Easy Bake Oven. No worries, it was a great Christmas, and I was a happy kid. Fast forward a couple of years and repeated requests for the illustrious Easy Bake Oven but alas no cakes made by the light of a 100-watt bulb. Looking back, I'm sure my mom anticipated the inevitable letdown that was likely to come with such a contraption after all the buildup in my mind.

Christmases came and went, and the Easy Bake Oven became a memory and then turned into a funny story one year about THE Christmas wish unfulfilled. My mom started commenting on how she was finally going to get it for me one day when one year well into my 20's, a large box appeared under the tree with my name on it. At that age, I was expecting some household appliance or cleaning device but lo and behold - an EASY BAKE OVEN!!! The family fell into laughter and placed their orders for the many things I had been waiting for almost 20 years to bake. I never actually made those delicacies, never even opened the box, but I still have that Easy Bake Oven. It has gone from house to house with me and currently sits on a shelf on my basement. It is a wonderful reminder of a Christmas wish granted long after it was made but a memory that will bring joy every time, I see it for years to come.

Rheanna McFarland

My Grown-up Christmas List

Do you remember me?
I sat upon your knee
I wrote to you
With childhood fantasies

Well, I'm all grown up now
And still need help somehow
I'm not a child
But my heart still can dream

So here's my lifelong wish
My grown-up Christmas list
Not for myself
But for a world in need

As children we believed
The grandest sight to see
Was something lovely
Wrapped beneath our tree

But heaven only knows
That packages and bows
Can never heal
A hurting human soul

No more lives torn apart
That wars would never start
And time would heal all hearts
And everyone would have a friend
And right would always win
And love would never end
This is my grown-up Christmas list