

# Welcome to a Year of Celebration!

**Week 49: November December 4-10, 2022**

## **Celebrate Advent (pt. 2: Preparation)**

This year, we are focusing on who God is and how we can celebrate him and the life that he offers to us. We will draw deeper into a relationship with the Lord through examining his nature and desire for personal intimacy with us as his people, and we are going to do so in such a fun way! We are going to journey in 2022 through practical ways to celebrate various holidays! We will look at many of your favorite celebrations: Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day and much more. We will explore the historic, liturgical holidays of the year, learn about the Jewish festivals of the Bible days, and even consider some of the celebrations of other religious faiths. I'm so glad you will be on this journey with us.

In this packet, you will find some ideas for you to grow closer to God, your family, and others. Nothing is required. It is all for fun and your personal enjoyment and growth. There are enough activities that you could do one or two per day during the week if you want. If you don't want to do something, skip it. If another idea comes to mind, do it. Watch for God's abundant goodness and celebrate it.

Come Join Us as We  
**CELEBRATE GOD!**



**"They celebrate your abundant goodness  
and joyfully sing of your righteousness."**

*Dr. Patrick Wilson*

**(Psalm 145:7)**

**2022**



# Video Devotional

Go to Patrick Wilson's YouTube page and watch the video devotional for this week: Celebrate Advent (pt. 2: Preparation). Then, consider and discuss with your family/friends the following questions:

- What is something you have had to prepare for recently? What did you do to prepare?
- What preparations do you think Mary and Joseph had to make before Jesus' arrival?
- How did Jesus come at the most opportune time?
- What do you need to do to declutter your soul in the coming year?
- What do you think God is preparing you for? How will you proceed?

## Craft: Manger Ornament

1. Arrange five popsicle sticks in the form of a barn/house (two for the roof, two for the sides, and one for the bottom).
2. Cut three popsicle stick in half.
3. On two halves draw faces for Mary and Joseph facing each other. On one half (or smaller) draw a sleeping baby for Jesus. Color and decorate them.
4. Glue the barn together and glue Mary and Joseph sticking up from the base (from the back).
5. Take two halves and glue them criss-cross on the front to make the manger. Glue baby Jesus to the center of the back of the manger. Glue the manger on the bottom.
6. Add additional decorations, such as a felt star at the top.
7. Make a hook of string or yarn.
8. Once dry, hang your ornament on the tree.

### Needed Supplies:

- Wide Popsicle Sticks
- Scissors
- Markers
- Pen
- Yellow Felt (Star)
- Other Decorations
- String or Yarn



# Food to Prepare

One of the most beloved beverages at Christmas is eggnog. According to Time magazine, “...While culinary historians debate its exact lineage, most agree eggnog originated from the early medieval Britain “posset,” a hot, milky, ale-like drink. By the 13th century, monks were known to drink a posset with eggs and figs. Milk, eggs, and sherry were foods of the wealthy, so eggnog was often used in toasts to prosperity and good health.”

Then, when the English came to the American colonies, they brought their traditions with them—including what would later become known as eggnog.

The name’s etymology remains a mystery. Some speculate that “nog” came from the word for a wooden cup, “noggin” or is a spin off of the word for a strong beer (grog). Rum was cheaper in the colonies and quickly became a substitute alcohol.

By the late 18th century, the name, “eggnog” stuck for this. Modern store-bought versions pale to compare with the homemade version (which can be upwards of 400 calories per cup), in that the US Food and Drug Administration permit the drink to be made and sold with as little as 1% egg yolk. Conversely, here is George Washington’s recipe, which is said to have been made with a dozen eggs:

“One quart cream, one quart milk, one dozen tablespoons sugar, one pint brandy, 1/2 pint rye whiskey, 1/2 pint Jamaica rum, 1/4 pint sherry—mix liquor first, then separate yolks and whites of eggs, add sugar to beaten yolks, mix well. Add milk and cream, slowly beating. Beat whites of eggs until stiff and fold slowly into mixture. Let set in cool place for several days. Taste frequently.”

Try your hand at making homemade eggnog this year rather than the store variety. Consider the struggles of the early colonists in America. Toast each other to a year of prosperity and good health but be sure to drink responsibly.

If you’d prefer a non-alcoholic option, consider this recipe by Ahead of Thyme, which only takes about 15 minutes to make but be sure to chill it for several hours or overnight:

<https://www.aheadofthyme.com/non-alcoholic-homemade-eggnog/>





# Movies to Watch

If you are movie fan, pick out a favorite movie to watch alone or with family/friends. According to IMDb, these are some of the best Christmas action movies. If you'd rather, just pick another great movie to watch together. Pop some popcorn, curl up on the couch, and enjoy the show!

## White Elephant

A common party idea is to have a “white elephant gift exchange.” According to legend, the tradition dates back to the 1800s King of Siam (modern Thailand), who gave an actual white (albino) elephant to someone he disliked. This rare breed of elephant is expensive to care for and a respected symbol in both Thai and Buddhist cultures. Thus, as a financial burden, the king gave it (and the burden of caring for the animal) to someone he wanted to disadvantage. This is an unsubstantiated myth.

The term was first used to speak of a party idea in 1907 in the Nebraska paper, *The Columbus Journal*. Traditionally, a “white elephant” gift is something that still has good use but is not needed by the owner who gifts it to someone else. There are a variety of ways that the gift can be shared with others. Even within your family, consider having a white elephant gift exchange. Enjoy the fun!

### Christmas Action Movies:

- Die Hard Saga
- First Blood
- Rocky IV
- 12 Monkeys
- The Princess Bride
- Lethal Weapon
- Gremlins
- The Jacket
- Death Race
- Red
- Night of Comet
- P2
- Prometheus
- Ronin
- Jurassic World
- Peppermint
- The Long Kiss Goodnight
- Iron Man 3



# Bible Study

“The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forever—more” (Ps. 121:7-8).

Psalm 121 is a short but beautiful song about God’s watch care over us as his people. In the previous verses of this hymn, the psalmist talks about how the Maker of the heaven and earth keeps our feet from slipping and watches over us, day and night. The depiction is that of a journey, which was dangerous in ancient times. People could easily be attacked, robbed, or murdered on the roads (i.e., the man in the Good Samaritan parable). So, the psalmist is trusting in God to watch over him as he travels.

Think about the journeys of the Christmas story, specifically the travel of Mary and Joseph so near the time of Jesus’ birth. This was a dangerous trek for them. Yet, like the psalmist, they trusted that God would watch over their lives—their coming and going. What great faith!

When you consider that life is like a journey, we need God’s watch care over us. Think back over your life and especially over recent months. When do you notice that God was there with you, watching out for you, and taking care of you? As you reflect on the unknowns about the forthcoming year, a lot of things remain unclear about the path before you. Like the psalmist, ask God to watch over you on the journey and to protect you as you walk into 2023.

## Prayer Time

In your prayer time today, reflect on the journeys of the Christmas story. Mary traveled to visit Elizabeth, Joseph took Mary to Bethlehem, the Magi travel from the East to see Jesus, and Jesus’ family travel to Egypt to hide from Herod. Consider travels that you have taken or plan to take over the holidays. Think about the challenges of these trips. Then, reflect on how life is like a journey. Spend your prayer time thanking God for caring for you along the way. Consider this prayer from Xavier University:

*“God of power and mercy open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy so that we may share his wisdom and become one with him when he comes in glory, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.”*



# Gift a Stranger

A common practice in many religions and cultures is giving gifts to people that you love. The Jewish festival of lights, Hanukkah, the Hindu celebration of Pancha Ganapati, and the Christian celebration of Christmas are just a few examples.

Gift giving was also a prominent part of the Roman festival of Saturnalia, which predates Christianity and was celebrated on the 17th through 23rd of December. Following sacrifices to the agricultural god, Saturn, and a huge feast, the

party continued with private gift giving and an atmosphere of human equality—slaves were considered equal with their masters. Gifts were exchanged on December 19th, called Sigillaria. Interestingly, the lower the value of the gift given the stronger the bond between the giver and the recipient.

When Constantine, who embraced Christianity (personally or politically), came to power in AD 312, many of the aspects of pagan festivals were incorporated in the Christmas celebration—including gift giving. For Christians, giving gifts is a symbolic way of enacting the gifts of the wise men who came to Jesus as a toddler in Bethlehem.

Modern day, Christmas gifts typically are shared among family and close friends. This year, consider getting a gift for a total stranger. Look in your community for ways to sign up and get an Angel Tree gift or get a gift and drive around until God puts someone on your heart to give it to (i.e., drive thru employee, homeless person on the street). You will be blessed!

## Share a Coca-Cola with a Friend

For a century, Coca-Cola has been using the Christmas season as a time of intensified advertisement. The first Santa ads used a stern-looking Santa Claus in the Saturday Evening Post. By the 1930s, Fred Mizen painted a department store Santa Claus in a crowd drinking a bottle of Coke.

If you can find glass Coke bottles, get them and cool them off in the fridge. Invite a neighbor or friend over to share a Coke and a smile. Enjoy the time getting to know each other better.

# Worship

Carve out some time to listen to worship music, hum or sing along. Here are some great songs to get you started. These songs are about the journey of Christmas. Look them up on YouTube if you don't have them in your music repertoire.

Pick your own songs and spend time worshipping and celebrating who God is to you and all the ways that he has blessed your life.

## Journey of Christmas Songs:

- We Three Kings
- I Wonder as I Wonder
- Away in a Manger
- The First Noel
- Do You Hear What I Hear
- O Come All Ye Faithful
- Mary Did You Know
- Go Tell it On the Mountain
- Little Drummer Boy
- The Prayer
- Breath of Heaven
- The Christmas Shoes
- A Strange Way to Save the World

## Challenge:

## Prepare for a Trip

When we travel, we make preparations. We make sure there is gas in the car, we have supplies and clothing, and we know where we are going. One day, Jesus is going to return. None of us know exactly what that day will be like, but we should strive to be prepared. Make a list of things that you'd like to do before Jesus returns and then start trying to do them.

"The Lord is coming, always coming. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognize him at any moment of your life. Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord." —Henri Nouwen