

Welcome to a Year of Celebration!

Week 52: December 25-31, 2022

Celebrate Advent/Hanukkah (pt. 5: Light)

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/Hanukkah (pt. 5: Light). Then, consider and discuss with your family/friends the following questions:

- What is your favorite candle fragrance? Why do you like it?
- What is your favorite Christmas tradition? Why do you like it?
- What does light symbolize for you? Why does the Bible describe God/Jesus as the Light of the World?
- How does light impact darkness?
- How has Jesus impacted your life this year?
- How can you bring "light" to others in your life?

Craft: Christmas Candle

1. Draw stars on contact paper and cut them out.
2. Attach stars on the outside of the mason jar.
3. Spray paint the outside of the mason jar and let it dry.
4. Remove the contact paper stars and discard them.
5. Cut a 14 inch strip of garland.
6. Layer the garland, balls, and candle inside the jar.
7. Cut a 16 inch strip of ribbon and glue it in a crisscross pattern around the neck of the jar.
8. Make a tag out of the cardstock and write "Jesus is the Light of the World" or other phrases on it and punch a hole.
9. Cut an 18 inch strip of ribbon and use it to tie the tag to the jar or make a bow and glue it to the jar.

Needed Supplies:

- Quart Size Mason Jar
- Contact Paper
- Scissors
- Glitter Spray Paint
- Evergreen Garland
- Red Glitter Balls
- Battery Operated Candle
- Ribbon
- Glue Gun and Glue
- Red or White Cardstock
- Hole Punch



Food to Prepare

Do you have a house full of people coming over for Christmas dinner? Maybe it is just you and your immediate family gathering around the dinner table. Perhaps you have a couple friends coming over or you are eating alone. Regardless of the gathering size, here are Delish's best Christmas dinner menu ideas. Fix one of them or your favorite family dishes for everyone to enjoy:

1. Pigs in a Blanket Wreath
 2. Parmesan Brussels Sprouts Salad
 3. Fish Pie
 4. Cherry Bourbon Glazed Ham
 5. Garlic Mashed Potatoes
 6. Chicken and Mushroom White Lasagna
 7. Crockpot Green Bean Casserole
 8. Beef Wellington
 9. Broccoli Cauliflower Casserole
 10. Pull-Apart Christmas Tree
 11. Perfect Roast Lamb
 12. Skillet Cornbread
 13. Pizza Casserole
 14. Grapefruit & Goat Cheese Fennel Salad
 15. Crab-Stuffed Mushrooms
 16. Bacon Wrapped Dates
 17. Crockpot Chicken and Dumplings
 18. Garlic & Herb Turkey Roulade
 19. Instant Pot Pork Puttanesca
 20. Smothered Pork Chops
 21. Brown Sugar Pineapple Ham
 22. Ruth Chris Sweet Potato Casserole
 23. Bacon Brie Crescent Wreath
 24. Italian Sausage & Pepper Frittata Affogato
 25. Potatoes Au Gratin
 26. Baked Brie In Puff Pastry
 27. Slow Cooker Garlic-Parmesan Chicken
 28. Fluffy Potato Rolls
 29. Cranberry Brie Bites
 30. Shepherd's Pie
 31. Vegetarian Mushroom Gravy
 32. Cheddar Pork Chops with Brussels & Apples
 33. Vegan Mushroom Pot Pie
 34. Kale Salad with Apples and Toasted Almonds
 35. Chicken Pot Pie Casserole
 36. Creamy Penne with Sausage & Tomatoes
 37. Cranberry Sauce
 38. Perfect Prime Rib
 39. Beef Tenderloin
 40. Turkey Meatloaf
 41. Osso Buco
 42. Beef Short Ribs
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Movies to Watch

If you are movie fan, pick out a favorite movie to watch alone or with family/friends. According to Silver Petticoat these are some of the best Christmas drama 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!

Game: Christmas Trivia Night

Come up with your own Christmas trivia based on the previous four weeks. This trivia can include things about where you went, what happened at work/school, food you ate, parties you attended, decorations around the house, ornaments on the tree, or even the Bible Christmas story. Make it fun and enjoyable for every age.

Set a night of Christmas Trivia. Pop popcorn, make hot chocolate, etc. Sit around the living room and see who remembers the answers. If you need help getting started, check out this Christmas Movie Trivia:

<https://crazylittleprojects.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ChristmasMovieTrivia.pdf>

Christmas Drama Movies:

- The Christmas Candle
- An Old-Fashioned Christmas
- Call the Midwife Series
- A Victoria Christmas
- Little Women 1994/2019
- The Knight Before Christmas
- Little Princess 1939/1986/1995
- The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe
- Dr. Who Christmas Episodes
- Hercule Poirot's Christmas
- Under the Greenwood Tree
- Cranford: Return to Cranford
- Love's Christmas Journey
- An Avonlea Christmas
- A Christmas Carol (many versions)
- Joyeux Noel
- Nutcracker
- The Nativity Story
- Babes in Toyland
- The Man Who Invented Christmas
- Christmas at Downtown Abbey
- Christmas Oranges
- Dickensian



Bible Study

“...the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Matthew 4:16).

In this verse, Matthew quotes from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 9:2). In its original context, Isaiah was looking to God to provide hope amidst the coming destruction on Judah. At the end of the previous chapter, the prophet describes those who do not seek God as having “no light of dawn” in them (Isaiah 8:20).

In Matthew’s case, the gospel writer sees Jesus as the Light of the World. Although the people live in darkness (a metaphor for ignorance, despair, and sinfulness), God did not abandon them: “...the people living in darkness have seen a great light.” Matthew is recognizing that the long awaited Messiah has come.

Jesus is the light we need to find our way out of the shadows that lead to deadly and perilous things. He offers to us guidance to help us navigate the troubles of this world safely. He offers to us warmth through his ever-present and undeserved love. He offers to us the beauty that comes to our lives when we can see things through his eyes.

As the new year approaches, there are lots of uncertainties. Yet, God remains on his throne. The same Jesus who walked on the earth after being born in a manger is with you to be the light along the way (Psalm 119:105). Take time this week, as the year draws to a close, and reflect on the ways that God has guided you throughout 2022. Seek his direction in the things you are currently facing. Let him be your Light in the year to come.

Prayer Time

There is one week left in 2022, and it is a great time to pray to the Light of the World for guidance in the new year. Light shows us what is before us, but sometimes that light is just for a step or two. Spend time this week, praying for God to guide you throughout the coming year. Ask for direction as you set resolutions and goals for 2023. Use this prayer from the Book of Common Prayer as a guide:

Almighty God, who has poured upon us the new light of your Incarnate Word; Grant that the same light enkindled in our hearts may shine forth in our lives through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Holiday Blues

For many people, the Christmas season is a time of joy. Even with stressful meal planning, travel and gift giving, it can be a happy time of year. Yet, for some people the holidays can be a difficult and emotionally exhausting time, or as Elvis sang, a “Blue Christmas.”

A survey of the American Psychological Association found that 38% of people felt their stress level increased over the holiday season, and that may be a low estimate. Such stress oftentimes leads to an increased risk of illness, substance misuse, and higher rates of anxiety and depression.

Health Partners, an organization that strives to improve health and well-being in people and communities across the country offers these suggestions to help and support someone with symptoms of depression during the holidays.

1. Check in with your family and friends often. Even those who seem to be doing well may be hiding their real feelings of anxiety and depression.
2. Listen with sympathy. You don't have to understand or remedy someone else's feelings to respect them and empathize with what they are going through.
3. Gently suggest talking to a professional. There is no shame in getting help; in fact, it is very brave to be honest about your struggles and seek assistance. Mental health professionals can coach long-term ways to manage stress, navigate complex emotions and situations, and find peace—especially during the holidays.

If you find yourself facing the blues this Christmas season, consider these helpful hints:

1. Make sure your expectations are realistic.
2. Practice saying “no.”
3. Limit external sources of holiday pressure.
4. Don't slack on self-care.
5. Talk to a mental health professional.

Your friendship through a difficult and lonely time can be the source of peace, joy, and hope in the life of another person.

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 light 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.

Light of Christmas Songs:

- Mary's Boy Child
- O Little Town of Bethlehem
- Silent Night
- What Child is This
- He Shall Reign Forever
- Light of the World
- Noel
- Christmas Offering
- Oh What a Glorious Night
- The Prayer

Thank You!

As 2022 draws to a close this week, I want to personally thank all of you for going on this journey with me. We've spent the entire year celebrating God's goodness and joyfully exploring his righteousness together. I've learned so much on this adventure with you. As we have dived deeper into our understanding of various holiday traditions and special occasions, my life was enhanced with greater insight into religious beliefs, practices and cultural activities. Through it all, I've learned more about God, myself, and the world around me. I hope that your life has been enriched through this exploration, and I look forward to a new adventure in 2023. Please let me know if you'd like to remain informed as we chart a course for the new year, exploring the crossroads of life.

"The brightest Christmas ever was lit by a single star and swaddled in the most drab colors, but offered mankind the greatest gift of all... true and lasting love." —Toni Sorenson