

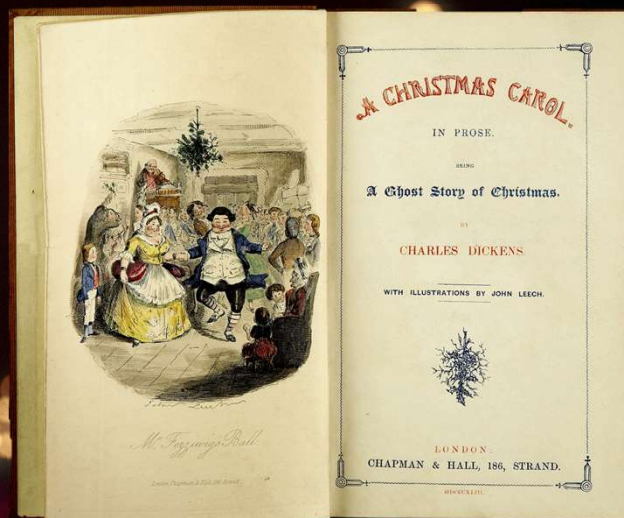
The Case for Christmas

Part 3: The goodness of Christmas

1

Fred to Uncle Ebenezer:

“And therefore, uncle,
though it has never put a
scrap of gold or silver in my
pocket, I believe that it has
done me good, and will do
me good; and I say, God
bless it!”



2

*Ace Collins, The Stories Behind the Great
Traditions of Christmas:*

“For centuries, Christmas was anything but a holy day. It was most often a sinful parade of excess, a day set aside for ignoring laws and even terrorizing citizens. Those who attended church did so in wild costumes, the messages of many priests were anything but scriptural, and gambling was common during the services. After church the poor often stormed the homes of the elite in moblike fashion, pounding on doors and windows, demanding the finest food and drink.



3

If the hosts did not respond, the guests broke into the homes and took what they wanted. The drunken celebrations harkened back to the time when Romans and Greeks marked the winter solstice with a weeklong festival of self-indulgence. As nothing about these celebrations was staid or reverent, many devoted Christians loathed the holiday and considered it an instrument of sin and evil.”



4

Almost every culture in history celebrated the “rebirth” of the sun on the shortest days of the year:

- The ancient Germans held fertility festivals in December
- In Asia Minor, the birth of the sun god Attis was celebrated on December 25
- The birth of the sun god Mithras was celebrated by the Persians on December 25
- The Greeks celebrated the coming of spring in late December by worshipping the sun

5

The Romans celebrated Saturnalia, a festival dedicated to Saturn, their god of peace and plenty. Saturnalia ran from Dec 17-24 and was the party to end all parties. Public places were decorated with flowers and banners; gifts and candles were exchanged, and the whole population celebrated with wild abandon.



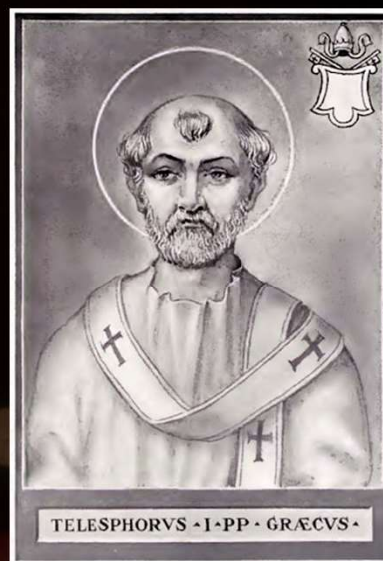
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To avoid persecution from the Romans, Christians would decorate their homes with Saturnalia holly. Newer Christians were often swept up in the revelry and their spiritual leaders were often appalled by how these young believers were pulled back into their old worldly lifestyles.



7

Christ's birth was not even celebrated until 125 AD when Telesphorus, second bishop of Rome, held church services to worship "the nativity of our Lord and Savior."



8

In 274 AD, when the winter solstice fell on Dec 25, the Roman emperor Aurelian proclaimed the date as *Natalis Solis Invicti*, the festival of the birth of the invincible sun.

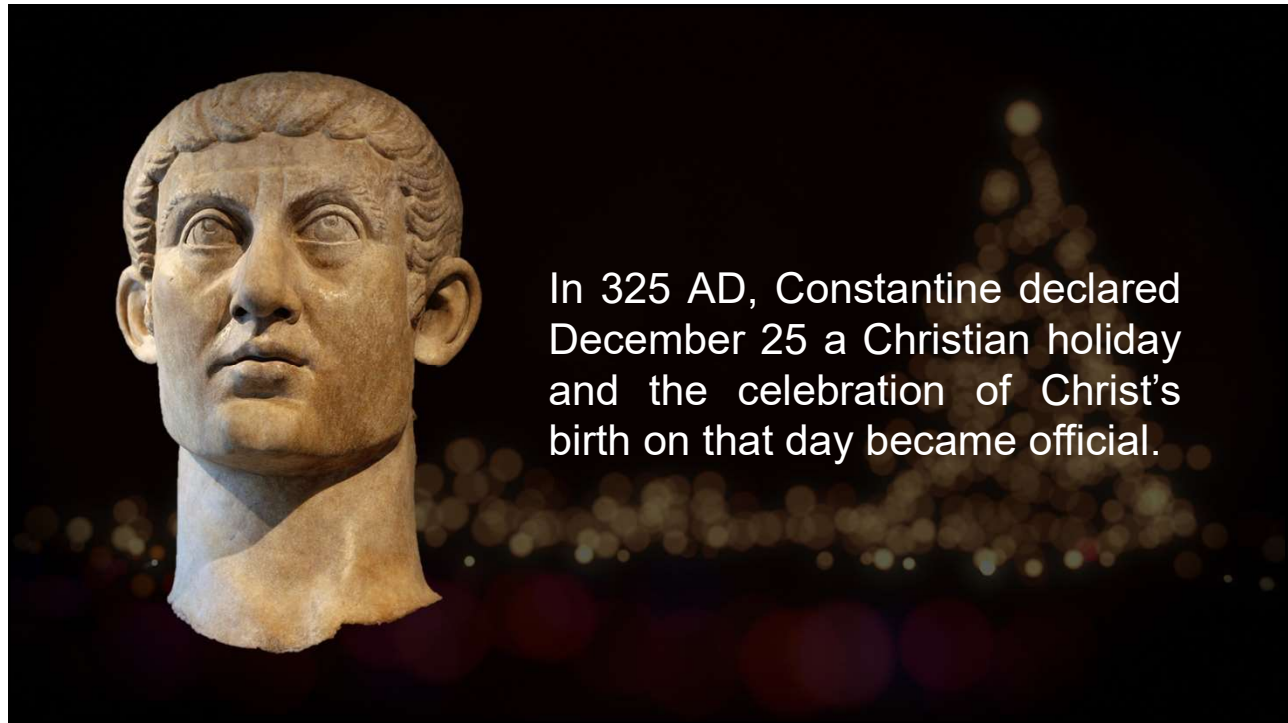


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In 320 AD, Pope Julius I declared December 25 as the date of the birth of “the invincible Son” – Jesus.

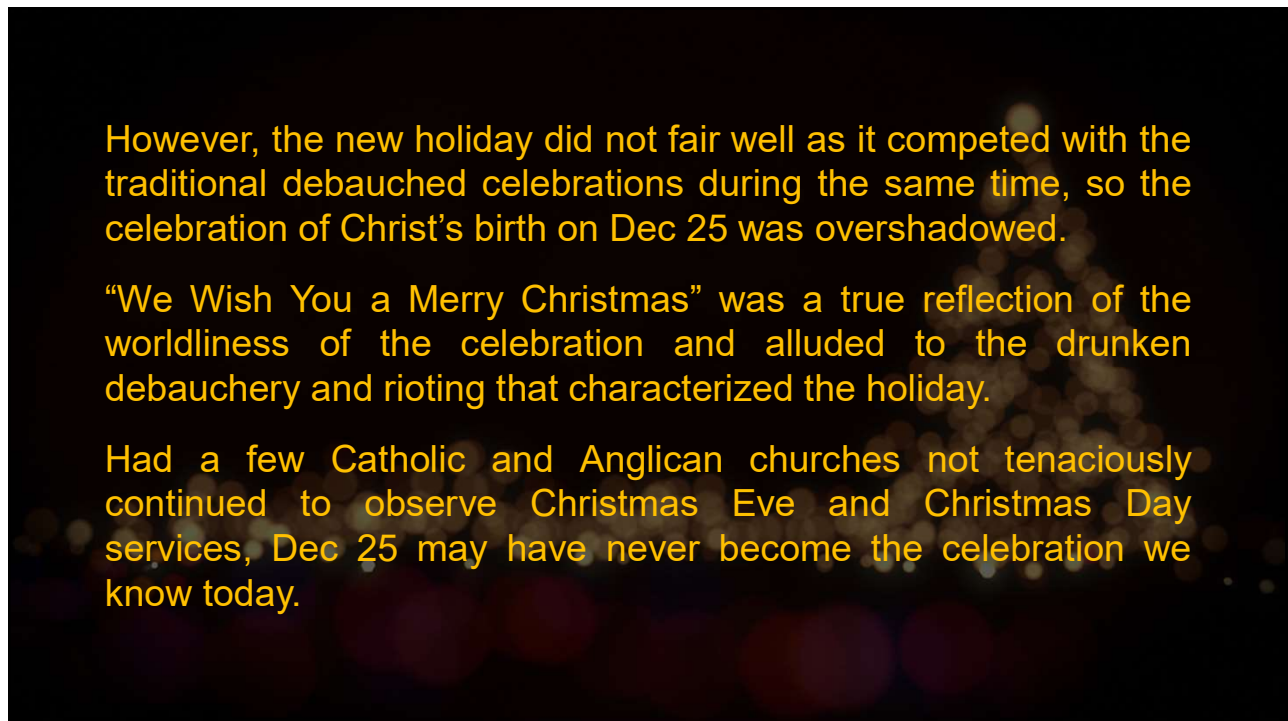


10



In 325 AD, Constantine declared December 25 a Christian holiday and the celebration of Christ's birth on that day became official.

11



However, the new holiday did not fair well as it competed with the traditional debauched celebrations during the same time, so the celebration of Christ's birth on Dec 25 was overshadowed.

"We Wish You a Merry Christmas" was a true reflection of the worldliness of the celebration and alluded to the drunken debauchery and rioting that characterized the holiday.

Had a few Catholic and Anglican churches not tenaciously continued to observe Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services, Dec 25 may have never become the celebration we know today.

12

The Separatists and Puritans outlawed Christmas and if anyone was found celebrating, they were arrested and fined.

These laws remained in force throughout the War of Independence.

Beginning in 1789 and continuing until 1856, Congress met on Dec 25 without even an acknowledgement of Jesus' birth.



13

Even though Christmas was illegal, the laws were eventually ignored, and Dec 25 once again became a day of drunkenness and revelry in America as it had been in Europe.

Things got so bad that the New York City Council met in special session in 1828 to devise a way to deal with the unlawful conduct of unruly citizens on Christmas Day.

14



By this time, Christmas had become a day of worship and a time with family and friends in Germany with decorations and treats for the children – eclipsed only by Easter.

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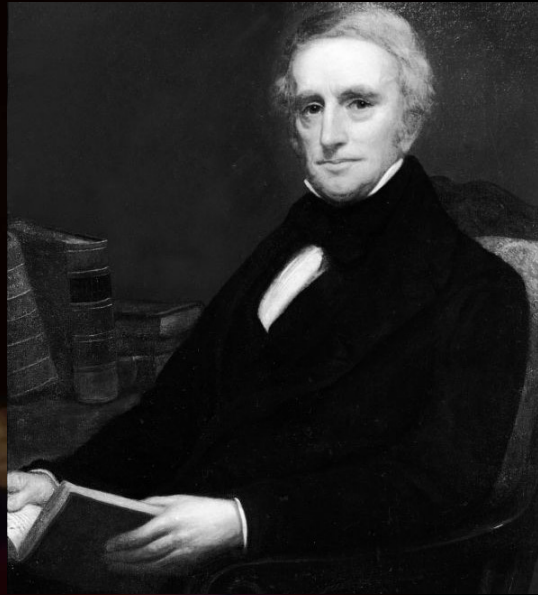
When England's Queen Victoria married Germany's Prince Albert in 1840, Albert brought his traditions of Christmas with him and turned Dec 25 in Windsor Castle into a family affair and wholesome celebration.

Soon, British society adopted these new Christmas traditions and Christmas was on its way to becoming the Christmas we know today.



16

In 1822, when the minister and educator, Clement Clarke Moore, wrote his poem, "A Visit from St. Nicholas" that later became "The Night Before Christmas," Christmas in New York City began to change – and eventually, all over the country.

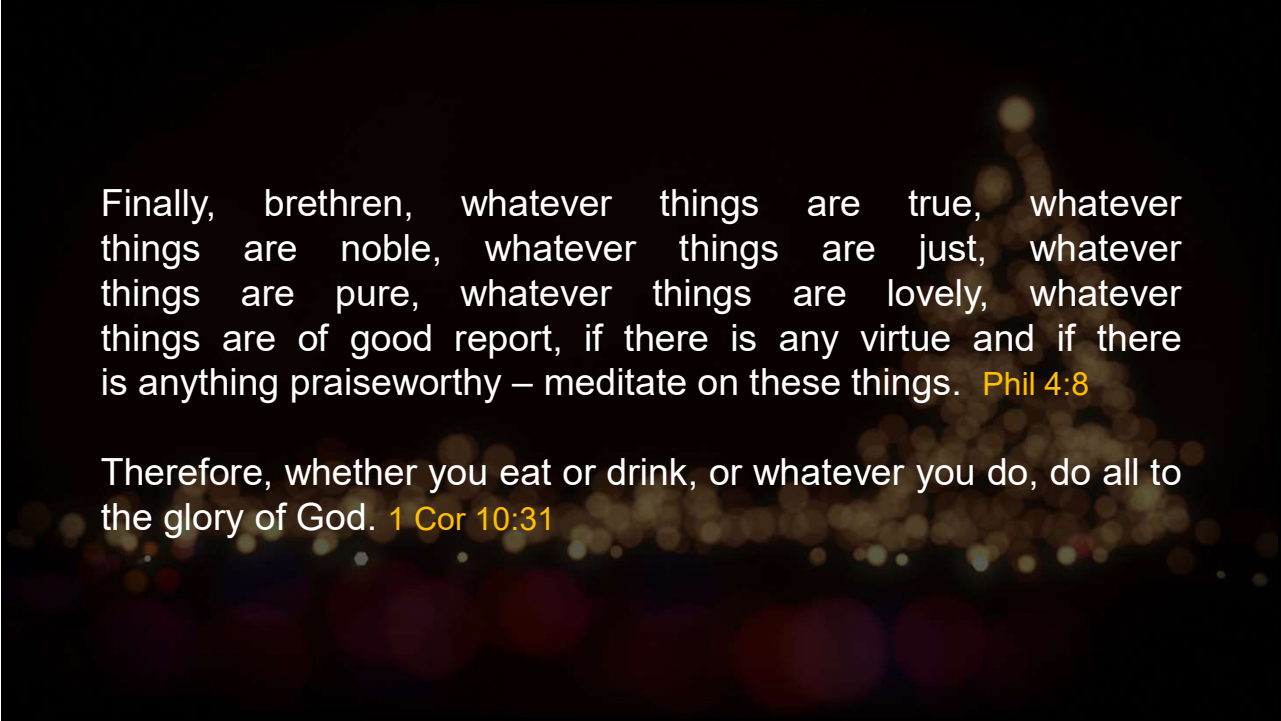


17



Then, when Charles Dickens wrote his *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, Christmas was catapulted to the Christmas we have known for almost 180 yrs.

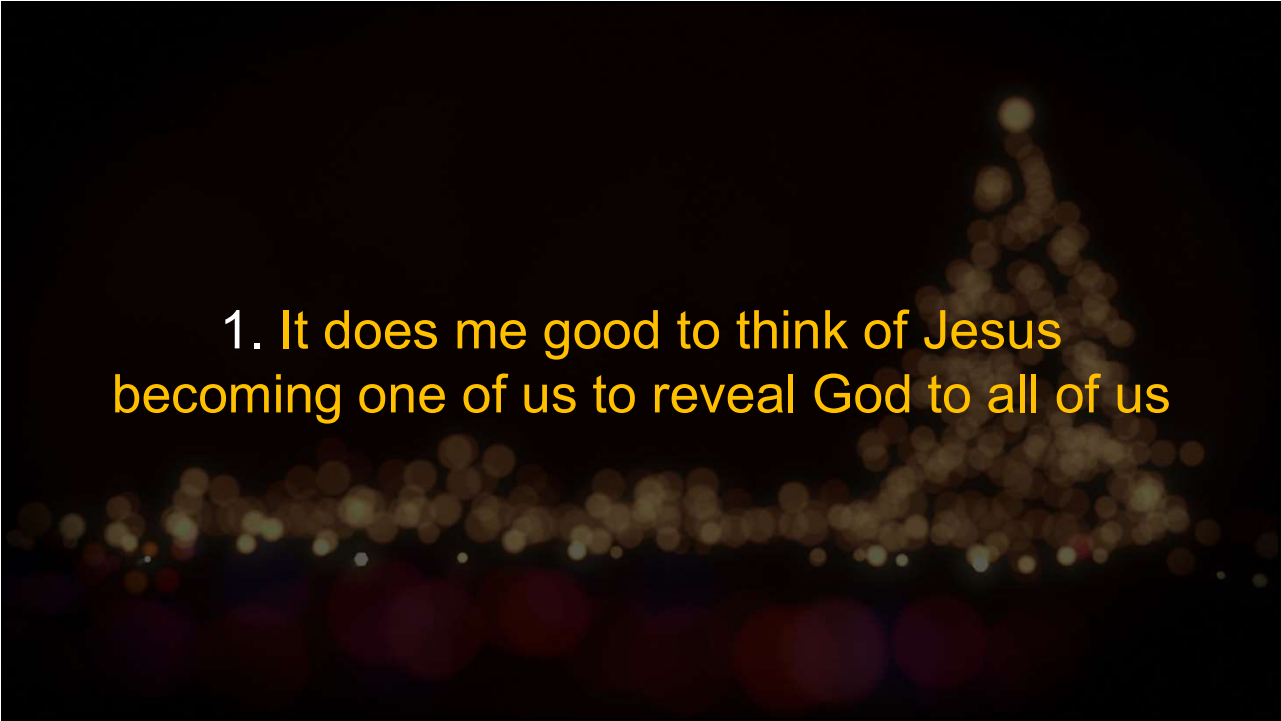
18



Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things. **Phil 4:8**

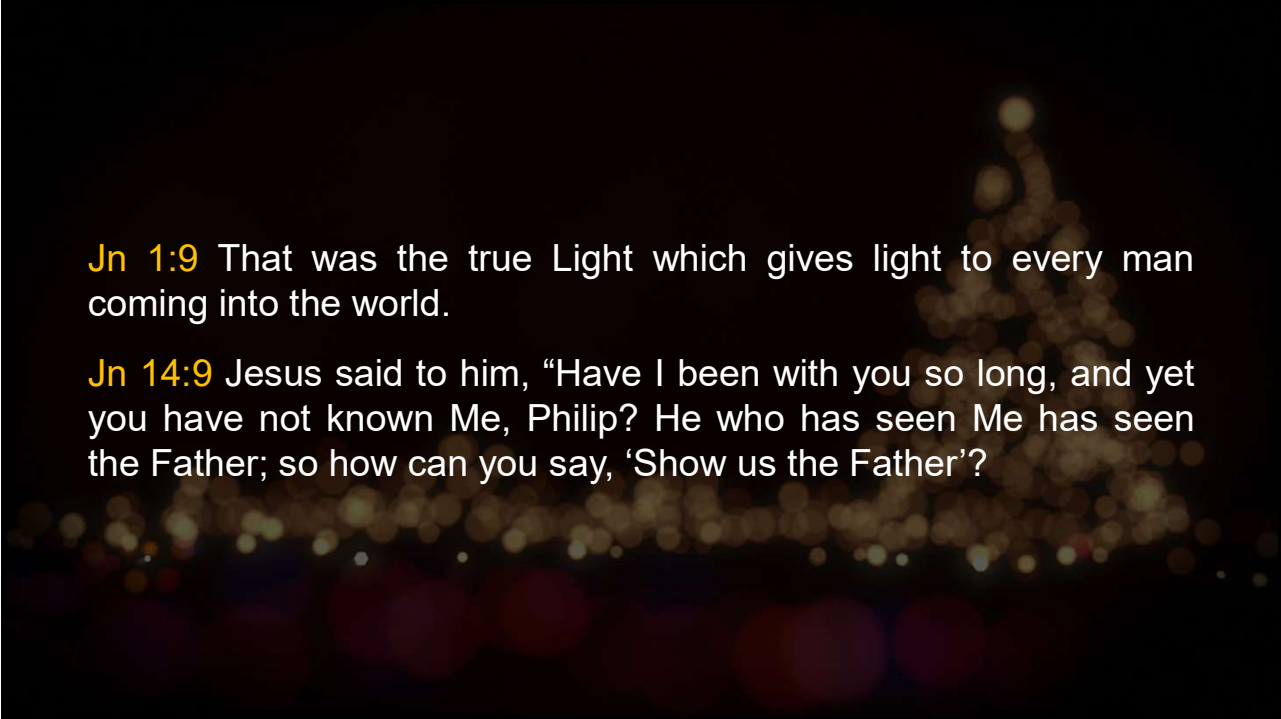
Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. **1 Cor 10:31**

19



1. It does me good to think of Jesus becoming one of us to reveal God to all of us

20



Jn 1:9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

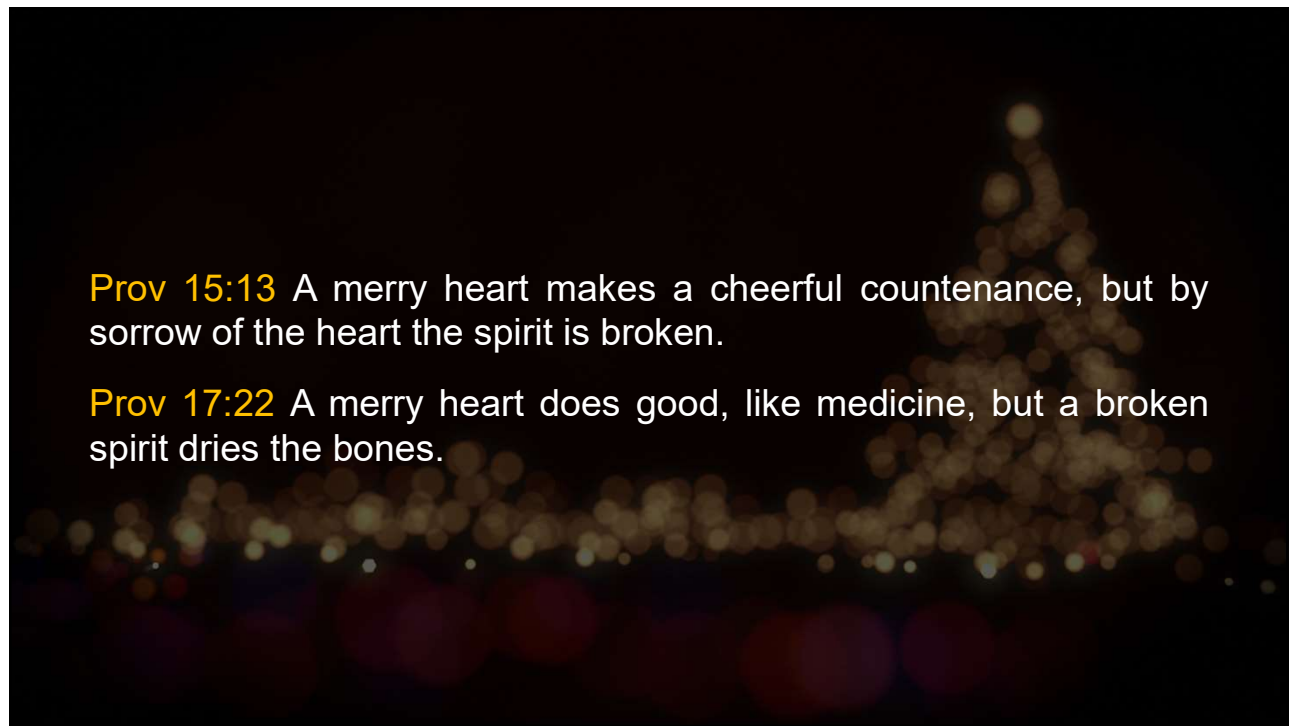
Jn 14:9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

21



2. It does me good to celebrate

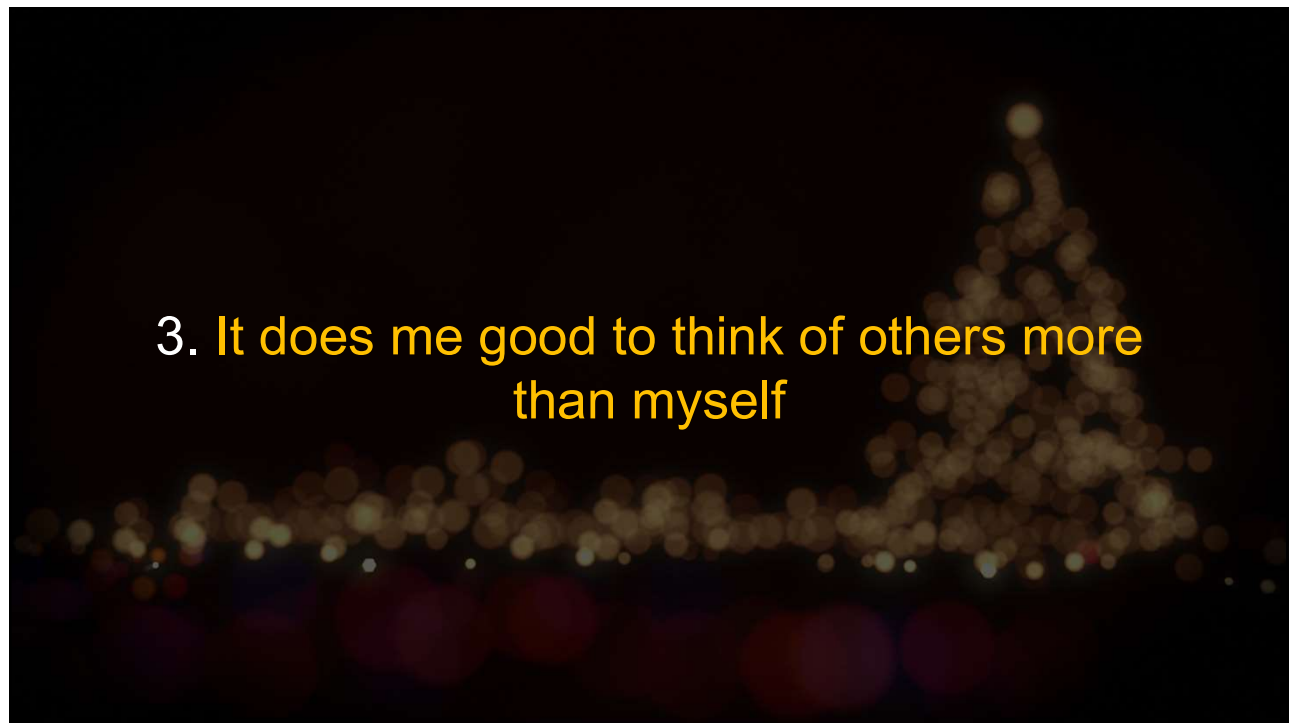
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Prov 15:13 A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

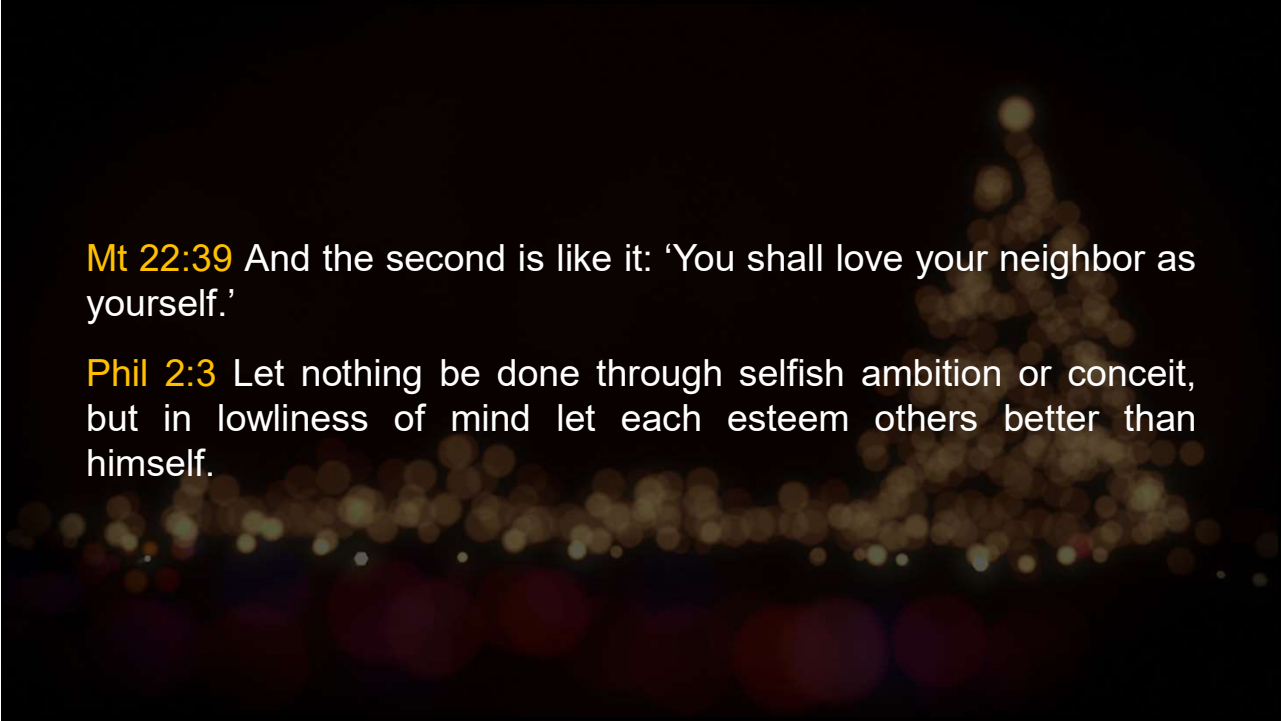
Prov 17:22 A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.

23



3. It does me good to think of others more than myself

24



Mt 22:39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

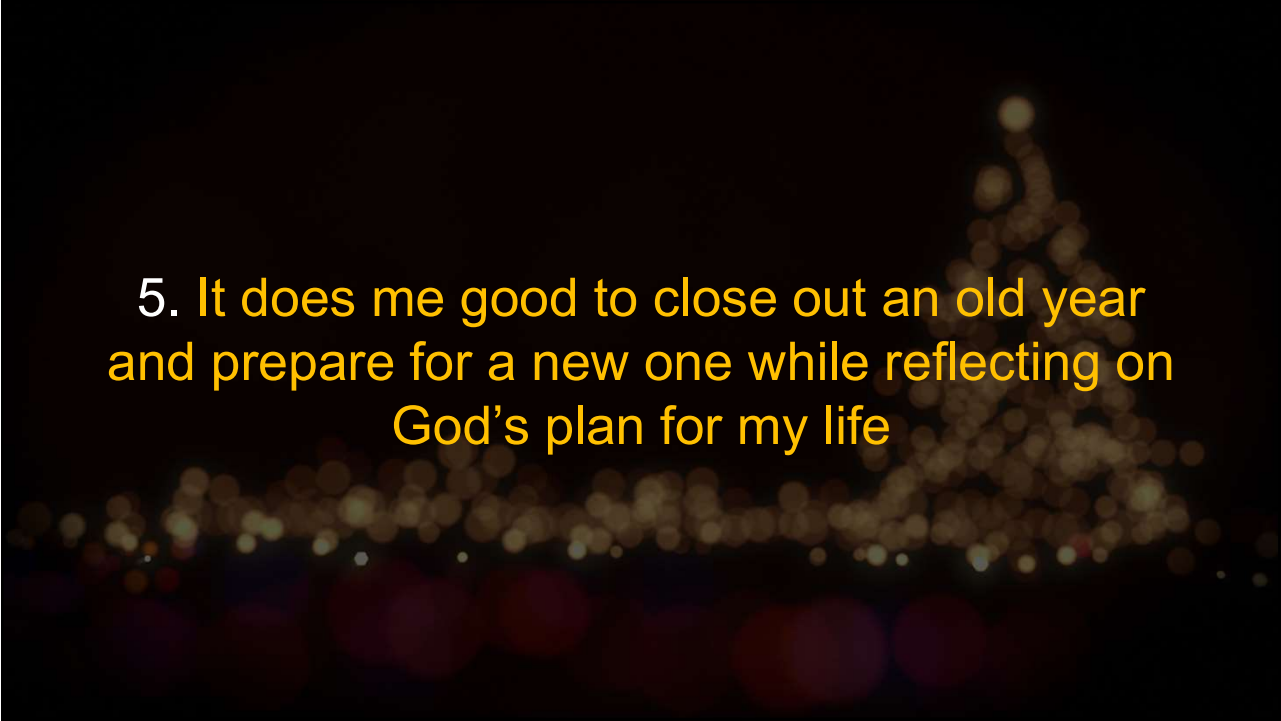
Phil 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

25




4. **It does me good to think of good times**

26



5. It does me good to close out an old year
and prepare for a new one while reflecting on
God's plan for my life

27



"Though many today may grow tired of
the commercialization of Christmas, in
reality it has opened the door for Christ to
once again become the focal point of the
season and for family, especially children,
to be at the heart of the celebration. So
today, much more than in the past, we
can truly sing, "It's the most wonderful
time of the year!" Ace Collins

28

Fred to Uncle Ebenezer:

“And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!”

29



30