



BLUEPRINTS

Reflecting God's Image Outside of Eden

December 2023

“What Manner of Man is This?” (p. 9)

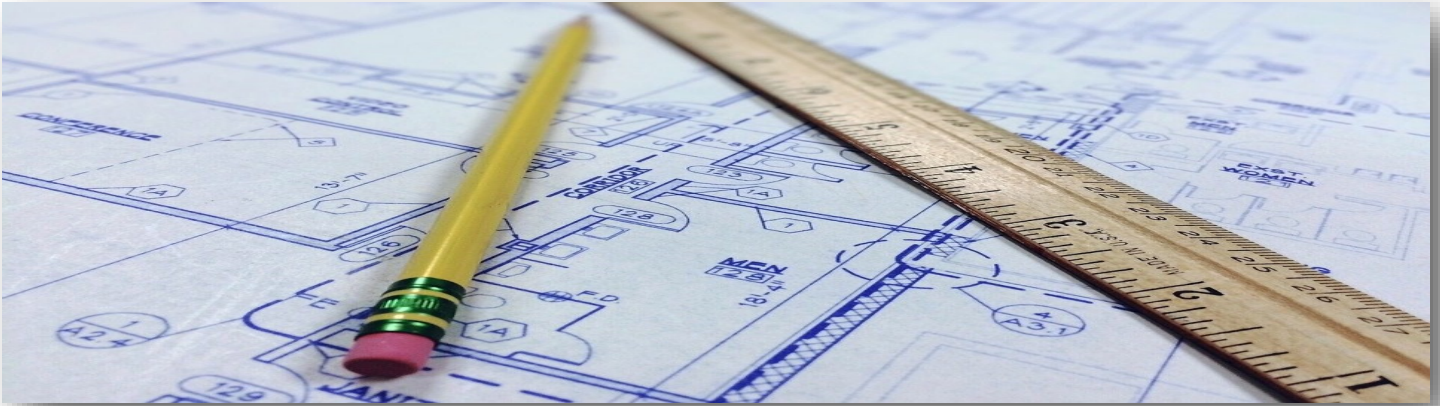
By Angel Price

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December 2023, Volume 5, Issue 10

Blueprints offers a bold message of original intent, which is that plan, purpose, and design God has inscribed into the heart of His men and women.

Credits

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Blueprints For Living Ministries, Inc. was birthed out of a preaching firestorm that occurred in "God's Country" (aka Hondo, TX) in 2011. Led by Jason Cole and Ruben Constante, Jr., this preaching revival stirred hundreds of men to seek God's will and purpose for their lives.

Two years later, Ruben created this ministry's newsletter, called *Blueprints*, which would become its first outreach platform.

By 2015, Ruben finalized this ministry's current curriculum, which is neatly organized into five blueprints. During those four years, God had initiated Ruben through a rigorous testing and refining process, which placed him in several crises of faith. These trial periods became pivotal moments in which he learned to cultivate God's design for his life.

Blueprints For Living Ministries, Inc. now stands as a clear voice in a world that has erased and redefined God's blueprint for humanity. What began as a few sermons from behind a prison pulpit is now a team of dedicated men who are driven to impart spiritual and secular education that promotes positive change and personal growth and development.

It is a call for a return to original intent.



Five Blueprints For Living

1. The Blueprint of God's Image
2. The Blueprint of Gender Design
3. The Blueprint of Marriage
4. The Blueprint of the Church
5. The Blueprint of Discipleship



PILLARS OF TRUTH

Because Blueprints For Living Ministries, Inc. is dedicated to standing on and proclaiming God's original intent for life, we center our worldview on the only standard which reveals original intent: the Holy Bible.

Aside from affirming the Nicene and Apostle's creed, we adhere to the Reformed positions of the Christian faith, those doctrines which the reformers believed were central to Christianity. We stand alongside Martin Luther, who boldly refused to recant the clear teachings of Scripture. Therefore, we stand on the Five *Solas* of the Protestant Reformation:

1. Sola Scriptura ("Scripture alone"): The Bible is our highest authority.
2. Sola Fide ("faith alone"): We are saved through faith alone in Christ Jesus.
3. Sola Gratia ("grace alone"): We are saved by the grace of God alone.
4. Solus Christus ("Christ alone"): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King.
5. Soli Deo Gloria ("to the glory of God alone"): We live for the glory of God alone.

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From the Desk of Ruben



We finally made it to the end of another year.

From one hardship and accomplishment to another, we arrived at the end of this blessed year. Thank You, Lord, for another year gone by.

I recently issued a five-day Thanksgiving challenge on my Tik Tok platform. I shared with my viewers how we can be thankful for pressure, opposition, being told no, restoration, and marriage. In each video, I outlined how important it is for us to take a deeper look at how our struggles actually point us to a greater understanding of how God works out all things together for our good.

Brothers and sisters, it doesn't matter whether you are incarcerated, what matters is how you steward your time and attitude. Don't wait to be released from your emotional and physical chains before you take charge of your life. Hardships and struggles may take away from you certain capacities, but they cannot take from you the power of choice. The power of the Holy Spirit is yours right now.

Own it.

Ruben Constante Jr.



Everyone Will See Him

Michelle Regino



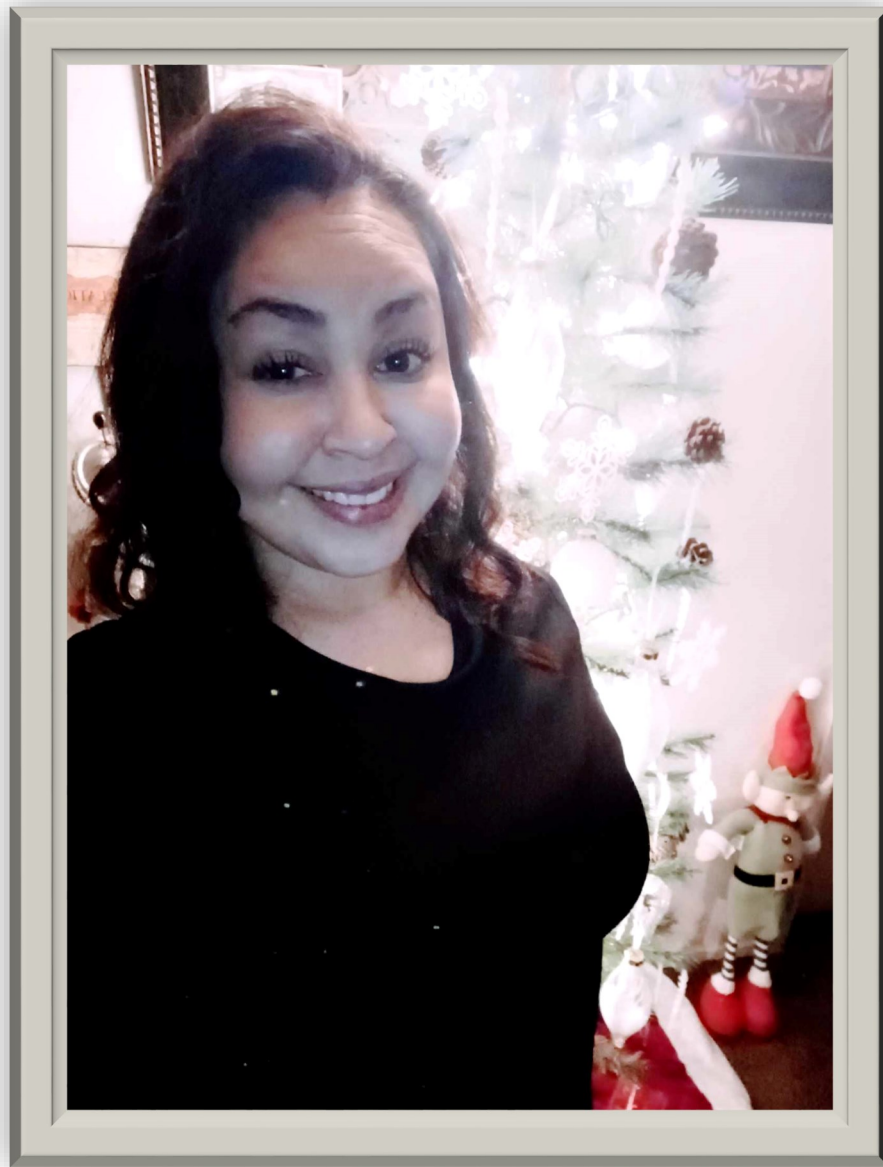
Someday, according to Christ, He will set us free. He will come back.

In the blink of an eye, as fast as the lightning flashes from the east to the west, he will come back. And everyone will see him~ you will, I will. Bodies will push back the dirt and break the surface of the sea. The earth will tremble, the sky will roar, and those who do not know him will shudder.

But in that hour, you will not fear, because you know him.

♥ AFTER I GO AND PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU, I WILL COME BACK
AND TAKE YOU TO BE WITH ME SO THAT YOU MAY BE WHERE I
AM.

JOHN 14:3 ♥



The greatest gift of all. . .

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

John 3:16

Merry Christmas and God bless you always.

(Michelle Regino)

Why apologize?

Ruben Constante, Jr.



What good is an apology if my behavior won't change?

Apologies are meant to begin the process of change, not avoid a nagging victim, much less evade the consequences that come with the offense. Apologies are a catalyst to change not a rejection of it. Consider three examples:

Number One: Speeding on the road.

When a police officer pulls me over, he or she has discretionary authority to either issue me ticket or let me off with a warning. If I apologize for speeding and the officer is generous at that moment, I might be let off with a warning. No ticket, no consequence. Let's say, however, that I speed again the next day and that same officer pulls me over; the chances are slim to none that I will be let off with a warning.

Number Two: Showing up late to work.

When my supervisor calls to my attention my tardiness, he or she has the power to write me up or let me off with a warning. If I offer a heartfelt apology and am let off with a warning, I escape a write up. No write up, no consequence. However, if I continue to arrive tardy, my supervisor will no longer give me a pass.

Number three: Being emotionally or physically abusive.

When my victim tells me to stop abusing them, they can either leave me, call the proper authorities, or give me a chance to make it right. If I say, "I'm sorry" and do not stop abusing them, I will lose my place in their lives. What they want is for me to change, not apologize for my bad behavior.

What all three of these examples illustrate is that apologies require action. If I don't stop speeding or being late or abusing my loved ones, then I prove that my ego is more important than doing what is right. What is revealed is a secret belief etched deep within my soul that I am above the law and do not need to change. I believe I am entitled to pursue my own way of living at the expense of others. And each time I apologize for doing something bad and *do not change*, I am simply manipulating my way out of a consequence. I don't really care that I did something wrong.

I am just upset that I got caught.



What Manner of Man Is This

Angel Price

Although we look to the Word for self-encouragement and to feed ourselves, the real freedom and encouragement comes from understanding that the Bible in its entirety shows God's hand and points us toward Jesus and His divinity.

Likewise, let's peek into the familiar story of the disciples and Jesus as they were on the boat in the middle of the storm. However, this time instead of focusing so much on the storm we're going to focus on the One who calmed it. This story pushes us to ask an important question: Who do we believe God to be? And along with that a related question: How does our understanding of who God is impact the way we respond to difficult seasons in life? What do we believe about God when we are in "the storm"?

What we often forget—even as believers—is that Jesus *is* God in the flesh. Like many familiar biblical accounts, the story of Jesus calming the storm is often misunderstood. When reading this story, it could be quick to realize that Jesus is revealed as the One who will calm every storm in our lives. While this is true, we are missing the main point of the text.

The Scriptures don't promise that Jesus will calm every storm. The real truth of the passage is that Jesus is God. He has power over the wind and the waves, and He is all-powerful. Therefore, because Jesus is God, we can trust Him and choose to live in faith in Him rather than fear, regardless of the situations of our lives. The fact that the disciples started to panic in the storm reveals both their fear and their lack of trust in Jesus. They were frustrated and angered by the fact that He was sleeping because they thought that He did not care.

Little did they know, He was sleeping because he was *in control*. When Jesus finally woke up and told the storm to be still, the disciples were terrified. "What manner of man is this?" they asked each other.

This brings me to my closing point: understanding that we can have a relationship with Jesus, God in the flesh, the One who calms the storms and causes the waves and winds to obey. Such a mind-blowing realization should bring us not only a sense of reverence in His power, but also joy. We should be quick to recognize His power and majesty and quick to trust Him. He hasn't promised to calm every storm, but He has promised that He will never leave us and never forsake those who trust in Him. ■



KNOW AN **Angry** PERSON?

Joel Malm

I watched a guy lose it at the airport the other day. Something happened with his flight and he started yelling and cursing – the cops eventually showed up.

I could relate to the guy’s frustration. I’ve felt that angry before. In fact, I’ve struggled with anger most of my life.

Working through my anger issues, I learned an important truth: Anger is a secondary emotion. It’s always a response to fear. When we get angry at something happening to us, it’s always because we feel a threat to one of the following:

1. Security (physical, financial, relational, emotional)
2. Connection (feeling valued, esteemed, seen, heard)
3. Empowerment/Control (having some say over our lives)

When you’re dealing with an angry person (including yourself), you’re dealing with someone who is afraid. The best thing to do is to explore which of those three is being threatened. (For the record, my anger is always related to threats to my sense of empowerment/control in a situation.)

Some folks really feel like they don’t get angry. They prefer the words “frustrated” or “irritated.” Interestingly, I’ve found people that don’t like to call it anger tend to be folks who are sensitive in the connection area. They’ve seen anger damage relational connection with others, so they don’t want to acknowledge it – but it’s still there. And it will eventually come out in harmful ways, typically in self-medicating.

We can’t afford to ignore negative emotions like anger.

Anger isn’t a sin. It’s just a sign. It’s like a warning light on our car. When we ignore the warning, that’s when anger quickly turns to a problem.

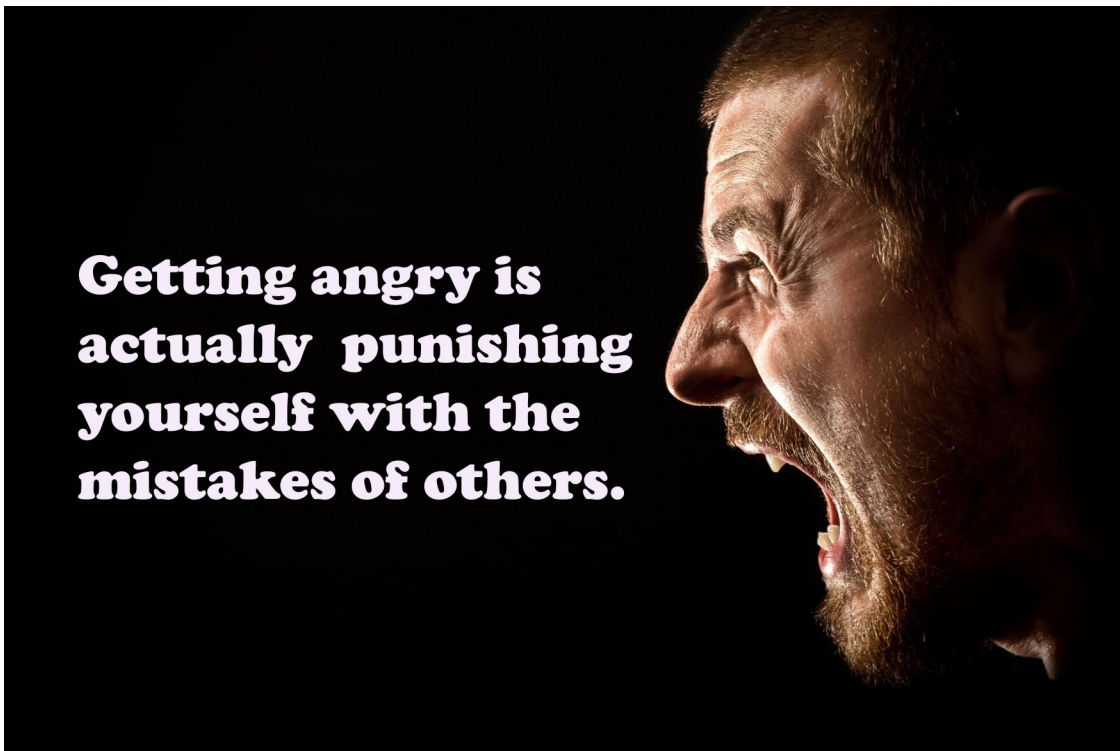
James said, “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.” (James 1:19-20)

Whenever we feel angry, it's important to slow down, not react, and use anger to help us evaluate where we feel threatened. Then take those feelings to God. It sounds simplistic, but God's love really is the only place we will find security, connection, and empowerment.

There's a lot of anger in our world right now. During the pandemic, we all felt fear. Now, it's naturally turning into anger. That's always the sequence – fear, then anger.

May we be those who don't ignore negative emotions or just react, but instead use those emotions for greater insight into how we can become all God wants us to be.

“The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” -Proverbs 20:5 🖼️



Reflecting on Love

Penny Constante

As I approach my 5th year wedding anniversary, I reflect back to my wedding day and what someone had said during his toast. He said that things will always change. I definitely see what he meant and the vows we make are put to the test.

As time goes on we have been through thick and thin, better or worse, sickness and health, rich (ok, maybe not that one yet!) and poor, we remain committed.

I have learned to plant my roots as seasons come they will pass. I will remain firm and strong in my commitment to this ever-changing love.

I love what has been, even hardships for they make me appreciate the easy times.

I love what is because I know I'm blessed.

I love what could be because we are building on a foundation of love and love never fails! 🌟

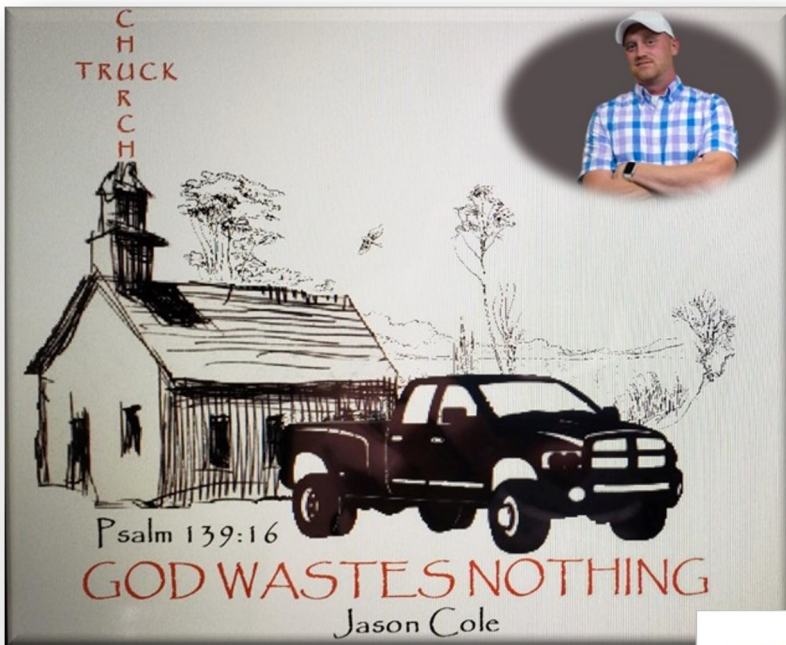




**Merry Christmas from me and my girls!
We love you all and pray for you always!**

Jason Cole

A special thanks to these faithful ministries and organizations who make our classes possible!



Stewardship: The Tithe in the New Testament, part 5

Adrian Pasillas



You've probably heard that the Old Testament tithe does not apply to the New Testament...but it does. The ancient non-biblical book, "Teaching of the Apostles", written at the end of the first century, shows its clear support of the tithe "principle" in supporting the work of the kingdom. Other early Christian documents showed how the primitive Christian community continued the practice. But there is also an admonition from this book to the believer, saying, "Let your donation sweat in your hand before you give it." Of course, it's not an implication that we are to have a grip so hard that we never give it. The point is to be very, very discerning as to where you give your donation.

Here's a controversy that has manifest itself throughout the ages concerning the centrality of the tithe. In Malachi 3:10 God says, "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house..." (ESV)...which bring up a little problem. Israel had a central sanctuary to where the Levites could distribute the tithe...be it animal, produce and so on. When Christianity came into effect, churches were established in practically every town, which made tithe centrality highly problematic.

Some people today believe that the local church is to be the storehouse, thus the only real place for us to give our tithes. But sacred scripture makes no mention, much more a requirement of the local church for any denomination being the only place. If that were the case, then all tithes would go to a central location, either by denomination or nation. The admonition of "sweating in the hand" implies discernment as to where the funds would go. The local church should have the bulk of the tithe, and the rest going to an investment of the kingdom, such as a seminary, a Christian college, and other worthy ministries (such as Blueprints for Living, ya think?). The fundamental idea of capitalism (also indirectly implied in the Bible) is delayed gratification, in that we don't spend all the money we earned, but instead we save it and invest it. This allows our capital to go to work for us, expanding our wealth, even giving to the furtherance of the kingdom.

The most important investment we can ever make is in the kingdom of God, because of its eternal rewards; not just for us but for our future generations. Jesus' admonition is quite apt

for today's believer and their progeny: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matt. 6:33)

Of course, you will have people saying, "I loved to, but I can't afford to tithe." In all practicality, if one invests in the kingdom, one won't lose anything. Giving is a grace that God gives to us; it is one of the important steps to spiritual growth. By the way, if you want to know how serious you are in giving, peruse your checkbook. It is an objective, concrete record of how serious you are in where your treasure is... as well as your heart.

There you have it: Bible reading, prayer, worship, service, and stewardship, the five key disciplines for a productive Christian walk. They are all vital, in our spiritual health as well as the church's. Faithful application is immensely important because, one day, we will also say what Paul had said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. 4:7) Selah! 🌑

Next: Truths of Our Faith





**WISHING YOU ALL
A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

Just as seasons change and people grow, we here at Blueprints for Living Ministries, Inc. are beginning a podcast in January called “Reflecting Him.”

With this outreach, we will conduct interviews with ex-felons who are living God’s design for their lives, provide engaging episodes with topical discussions that point toward the image of God, and motivate everyone to seek God’s design for life.

Stay tuned. . .



A girl bought an iPad. When her father saw it, he asked her "What was the 1st thing you did when you bought it?"

"I put an anti-scratch sticker on the screen and bought a cover for the iPad" she replied.

"Did someone force you to do so?"

"No"

"Don't you think it's an insult to the manufacturer?"

"No dad! In fact, they even recommend using a cover for the iPad."

"Did you cover it because it was cheap & ugly?"

"Actually, I covered it because I didn't want it to get damaged and decrease in value."

"When you put the cover on, didn't it reduce the iPad's beauty?"

"I think it looks better and it is worth it for the protection it gives my iPad."

The father looked lovingly at his daughter and said, "Yet if I had asked you to cover your body which is much more precious than the iPad, would you have readily agreed?"

She was mute.

The father continued. "Indecent dressing and exposure of your body reduces your value and respect. Always dress decently."

**This is the
Season**

**This is the
Reason**



Thank you
Jesus!

**Mary delivered a baby, and
that baby delivered me!**



Pastor Israel & Daisy and all of us at Redeemed Ministries want to wish each and everyone of you a Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year.

The Word of God confirms to us in the Book of Joshua 1:8 "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For them you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Amen



“And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth”

Luke 1:14

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

(Adrian Pasillas)

Is Christmas a Pagan Holiday?



No, Christmas is not a pagan holiday. Christmas is the Christian remembrance and celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that, in Christ, God entered the human race and so deserves the title Immanuel or “God With Us” (Matthew 1:23). Even so, some say that various Christmas traditions have pagan origins, so the question is legitimate.

First, the pagan origins of Christmas are far from certain. The winter solstice, often tied with Christmas, never falls on December 25. Likewise, Saturnalia, which has also been proposed as the origin of Christmas, was never celebrated on December 25. Other Christmas symbols, such as trees and candles, may have had some pagan connotations, but these are so common in human experience that it can hardly be claimed that their use was ever exclusive to paganism.

Second, the meaning of any word, symbol, or custom is determined by current usage, not origin. Many words and practices have departed from their origins and no longer mean anything close to what they once did. For instance, the swastika has been around for thousands of years as a symbol of good fortune. It was therefore reasonable for the Nazi party to take this as their symbol, as they emphasized that they were the party to bring good times back to Germany, which was going through hard times after World War I. However, it would be absolute foolishness for a person to decorate his home today with swastikas based on their “real meaning.” The swastika has been so thoroughly identified with the horrors of the Holocaust that, in the current culture, it is a symbol for anti-Semitism and all things evil. The original meaning of the symbol is completely irrelevant.

Likewise, if you asked the average American to tell you about Nike, probably better than 90 percent would talk about a brand of athletic shoes and clothing with hardly any mention of the Greek goddess of victory for whom the company is named. In a Google search of the term *Nike*, you would have to sift through dozens of results before you found anything about the Greek goddess Nike. When you see someone wearing the famous “swoosh,” your first thought is of a modern company, not an ancient goddess, and no one would assume that the wearer of said clothing is a worshiper of the goddess.

Regardless of what the Christmas symbols may once have meant, their use today needs to be evaluated on the basis of what they mean today. To automatically associate candles, colored lights, or decorated

trees with pagan worship is unwarranted.

If there are unbiblical practices in our Christmas celebration, then those should be forsaken. Feasting is biblical, but gluttony is not, so perhaps that is an area that Christians need to think about in their Christmas celebrations. Drinking alcoholic beverages is not forbidden by the Bible, but getting drunk is. So, a Christian celebration should not involve drunkenness. Giving of gifts is biblical, but going into debt or spending beyond your means is not, so Christmas gifts should be purchased responsibly. It's good for Christians to examine their celebrations to make sure that they truly honor God.

Third, when cultures clash, there is always an attempt to change and co-opt language and cultural symbols. Paul had no problem co-opting a pagan altar in order to spread the gospel. Speaking at the Areopagus, he says, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23–24).

If what we know as Christmas originally started out as a pagan celebration, then it has been so successfully co-opted by Christians that any self-respecting pagan would be distressed at what Christians have done to it. Christmas celebrations are so completely the opposite of paganism that any suggested link between the two can be disregarded.

Christians celebrating Christmas are no more pagan than are churches who gather to worship on Sunday (so named because it was the pagan "Day of the Sun") or who hold a prayer service on Wednesday (named after the Norse god Woden). The pagan origins of the names of the days of the week have nothing to do with the church's weekly gatherings, and ancient pagan winter festivals have no real bearing on the modern Christian celebration of Christmas.

Imagine a second- or third-century Christian reflecting on his town's celebration of Saturnalia. He thinks to himself: "The whole town is celebrating Saturnalia with feasting and giving of gifts. They are talking about 'freeing souls into immortality' and 'the dawn of a golden age.' I think this might be a great time to throw a party and invite my friends over to tell them how their souls really can be freed into immortality and the dawning of the truest golden age of all, the Kingdom of God. I think it might be a good idea to give them some gifts as well in honor of God's giving us the greatest gift of all." In this way, a celebration is "redeemed" for God's glory and Christians are given a biblical alternative to the pagan day.

With every cultural practice, Christians usually fall into three different camps. Some simply accept the practice wholesale without any reflection. Obviously, this is unwise. Other Christians will simply reject it and often retreat into a Christian subculture. Finally, some will carefully reflect on the cultural practice, embrace what they can, reject what's ungodly, and redeem what's worth saving. Christians have been so successful in co-opting some cultural practices that no one even remembers what the original meaning of the practices was. If the origins of Christmas are indeed pagan, then this



is what happened, to God be the glory! Would to God that it would happen to more of our social and cultural conventions and activities.

Although not written about Christmas, Romans 14:5–6 seems to apply: “One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord.” If an individual Christian does not feel comfortable with some or all aspects of the celebration of Christmas, that Christian should do what he or she believes to be right. He should not judge others who believe and celebrate differently, nor should the others judge him, when no clear biblical guideline is involved.



Saint Nicholas and the Origins of Santa Claus

Stephen Nichols

It might surprise many today to find out that Saint Nicholas (spoiler alert) is a real person after all. Is he the white-bearded man with a red suit, a cap, and a sleigh?

Not quite, but he probably was bearded, did wear a hat, and did travel in horse-drawn, not reindeer-drawn, transportation. The legend behind Santa Claus is Saint Nicholas, the fourth-century bishop of Myra. His hat was the bishop's mitre.



Nicholas was born in modern day Turkey to a rather wealthy family. Losing his parents at a young age, Nicholas dedicated both his fortune and his life to the Christian church. Very quickly he was appointed the bishop of Myra, on the southern coast of modern day Turkey.

These were days of persecution for Christians. Roman Emperor Diocletian, who reigned from 284–305, hated Christians and stuffed Roman jails full of them. Bishop Nicholas spent the first few years of the fourth century in jail and faced routine beatings. In the next decade, Constantine legalized Christianity and Nicholas was set free.

As the legend goes, Bishop Nicholas was present at the Church's First Ecumenical Council at Constantine's summer palace in Nicea in 325. Hundreds of Bishops gathered there to refute the false views of Arius, a presbyter from Alexandria. Arius denied Christ's deity. At one point while Arius was addressing the council, Nicholas's rage got the better of him. According to some of his biographers, Nicholas stood up, crossed the floor to Arius, and promptly punched him in the face.

For the assault, Nicholas found himself back in jail again. The bishops deliberated his fate. Nicholas was repentant and sought forgiveness. After the Council, Constantine granted clemency and restored Bishop Nicholas to his post.

And at his post Bishop Nicholas diligently served. Over the course of his entire life he was known for being extremely generous. He was especially generous to children, regularly giving them gifts. Myra was a busy port city with ships and sailors coming and going. The ships went out of Myra's port loaded with gifts and goods for the needy, all provided and packed on by Bishop Nicholas. His gifts went all around the Mediterranean world. As sailors went around the world, they took with them the stories of the generosity of Bishop Nicholas.

The year of Bishop Nicholas's death is uncertain, but the month is firmly believed to be December. As the story of his generosity spread, the stories of his life grew and grew. He was becoming legendary. In the sixth century, a church was dedicated to him and named for him in Constantinople. His image was depicted more in the Middle Ages than any other except those of Christ and of Mary. No longer Bishop Nicholas, now he became Saint Nicholas, and his Feast Day would be December 6.

One of the legends around Nicholas concerned his giving dowries to young poor girls so they would be able to marry. To reflect that legend, images of him carrying bags bulging with gold coins began to appear.

As his legend moved northward, the story takes an even more interesting turn. In Germany, the tradition arose of giving gifts to each other in the name of Saint Nicholas. So, too, in the Netherlands. The Dutch word for him became Sinterklaas. The German word eventually became Santa Claus. These celebrations of gift-giving occurred on December 6, the anniversary of his death. The gift of a gold coin was highly prized and showed great favor.

Even Martin Luther would come to play a role in the legend. Luther wanted a Protestant alternative to the Roman Catholic practice of celebrating the Feast of Saint Nicholas (Santa Claus). Instead of giving gifts in the name of Santa Claus on December 6, Luther started the tradition of giving gifts in the name of the Christ child, Christkindl, on Christmas Eve. Perhaps in this we have an argument for Protestant kids everywhere as to why they should be allowed to open at least one present on Christmas Eve.

Luther loved Christmas. He wanted it to be a celebration of giving around the supreme gift of the babe born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. As he preached in 1530, "He who lies in the virgin's lap is our Savior . . . give thanks to God, who so loved you that he gave you a Savior."

Christmas evolved from the word Christ Mass, the celebration of the incarnation of Christ, fixed by tradition as being on December 25. The word Luther coined, Christkindl, also evolved over the centuries. It would become Santa Claus' other name, Kris Kringle. This effort of Luther's to move away from the Santa Claus tradition inadvertently veered right toward it.

So, we have the story of Santa Claus. Interestingly enough, Saint Nicholas and his legend began in the early church. The stories wove their way through the Middle Ages, and they even made an appearance at the Reformation. Those stories still live with us today.

Don't forget to stop by our social media sites to see more of what God is doing through our ministry.

